



11.23.05

From the Library of
Professor Samuel Miller
in Memory of
Judge Samuel Miller Breckinridge
Presented by
Samuel Miller Breckinridge Long
to the Library of
Princeton Theological Seminary

BR 165 .M8313 1813 v.2
Mosheim, Johann Lorenz,
1694?-1755.
Commentaries on the affairs
of the Christians before



COMMENTARIES

ON THE

AFFAIRS OF THE CHRISTIANS

BEFORE THE TIME OF

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT;

OR,

AN ENLARGED VIEW OF

THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE
FIRST THREE CENTURIES.

ACCOMPANIED WITH

COPIOUS ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES AND REFERENCES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF

JOHN LAURENCE MOSHEIM, D.D.

LATE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GOTTINGEN.

BY ROBERT STUDLEY VIDAL, Esq. F.S.A.

ΠΑ'ΝΤΑ ΔΟΚΙΜΑ'ΖΕΤΕ· ΤΟ ΚΑΛΟ'Ν ΚΑΤΕ'ΧΕΤΕ.

Il faut donc avouer que quelques que puissent être les suites de l'examen, on doit s'y exposer; et puis qu'il faut nécessairement que nous jugions, que l'on doit acquérir les lumières nécessaires pour juger solidement.

LE CLERC.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES, IN THE STRAND.

1813.

* * * In addition to the very respectable testimony of the Reverend Henry Kett (see Preface to the former volume, p. viii.), the translator feels considerable gratification in being permitted to lay before the Reader the following extract from a letter addressed to him by his much-respected friend, Charles Butler, Esq. of Lincoln's Inn, with the depth and extent of whose researches in Ecclesiastical and Civil History, the learned world has not now to be brought acquainted.

“ I am rejoiced at your intention of favouring us with a publication of your translation of Mosheim's Commentaries. The original work is quite familiar to me. Some years ago I read the whole of it attentively, and committed to paper the observations which occurred to me in the perusal of it. I have since very frequently consulted it. There can be no doubt of its being a work of profound and extensive erudition, and that it contains much learning both in respect to fact and deduction which is no where else to be met with. It also abounds with historical and literary anecdote. In every sense it is a distinct work from the Ecclesiastical History; so that it may be deemed as necessary to the possessors of that work, as if that work had never been written.— I think your style very clear, and well suited to the work; and have no doubt but that your translation of the Commentaries will be quite as popular as Maclaine's of the General History.”

“ I hope you will accompany it with some dissertations of your own, for which the work affords you an excellent opportunity: and, in regard to this I would beg leave to call your attention more particularly to

four subjects, none of which have been much noticed by the writers of this country. The first is an account of the Manicheism of the middle ages, which may be done by a continuation of Mosheim's note on the original Manichees. Mosheim's own account of those of the middle age in his general Ecclesiastical History, and Bosnage's account of them in his History of the Reformed Churches, contain much curious matter, but are imperfectly executed. I think this is admitted by Dr. Maclaine the translator of Mosheim.

“The conversion of the northern nations is also an interesting subject, and I apprehend you will find curious materials for it in Mosheim's account of the conversion of the Tartars: but I speak of that work from the author's general character, for I have never seen it.

“The third dissertation I suggest to you is a History of the Apostles' Creed. Mosheim's notice of it is too short.

“The last dissertation I take the liberty to hint to you is a geographical account of the ecclesiastical division of the Christian world at the time of the final division of the Roman Empire, accompanied with a map. You will find ample materials for this in Bingham, and Ezekiel Spanheim.

“I only beg leave to add, that I can scarcely conceive a more curious work than a full historical account of the different confessions of faith by which the Christian churches profess themselves to be regulated. This would be a fine addition to your work, but would exceed the limits of a dissertation.”

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE SECOND CENTURY.

SECT.	PAGE
I. Extensive propagation of the Christian religion - - -	1, 2
— Certain passages in the early Fathers relating to this subject, to be understood with some qualification. Note [a] -	2—5
II. Mission of Pantænus to India - - -	3—6
— The people to whom he was sent probably Jews who had settled in Arabia Felix. Note [b] - - -	6—8
III. Origin of the Gallic, German, and English churches - - -	7—16
— The three different opinions that have prevailed respecting the origin of the Gallic church examined. Note [c] -	8—13
— The German and Gallic churches probably owed their foundation to the same persons. Note [d] - - -	13—15
— Statement and examination of various opinions respecting the origin of the British church. What upon the whole appears to be the most rational hypothesis in regard thereto. Note [e] - - -	16—22
	Num-

SECT.	PAGE
IV. Number of Christians in this age -	17—27
— Reasons which have induced writers of the most opposite characters and views to concur in undervaluing the churches of this century. It is clear even from the testimony of heathen writers that the Christians must at this period have been very numerous. Note [g] - -	23—26
V. Causes to which the rapid propagation of Christianity is to be attributed -	27—32
— The belief that miraculous powers were possessed by great numbers of the Christians in this and the succeeding age not at all contrary to sound reason. Dr. Middleton's <i>Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers</i> , &c. an insidious publication. The high ground taken by this author however to a certain extent abandoned by him previous to his death. Note [i] - - - -	28—32
VI. Human causes which contributed to forward the propagation of Christianity	23—41
— Various translations of the New Testament into the Latin and other languages made even at this early period. Not certain that any of them have reached our days. Latin translations particularly numerous. More than ordinary excellence attributed by Augustine to one termed <i>the Italic</i> . Great endeavours used by the learned of France and Italy to recover this version. Their labours unattended with success. Mistaken ideas entertained by them on the subject. Note [k] - - -	ib.
— Why the early apologists for Christianity did not concern themselves with demonstrating its divine origin. Note [l]	40, 41
VII. Disingenuous artifices occasionally resorted to in the propagation of Christianity	41—45
— The Sybilline verses, a spurious composition. Note [m] - - - -	42
I	The

SECT.	PAGE
VII. The Poemander and other writings falsely attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.	
Note [o] - - - - -	43
— Montanus suspected to have been the author of the Sybilline verses. Note [p]	44
VIII. State of the Christians under the reign of Trajan - - - - -	45, 46
— Populace continually incited to persecute them - - - - -	<i>ib.</i>
— The persecution in Bithynia under Pliny the Younger obviously originated with the heathen priests. Note [t]	46, 47
IX. Trajan's law respecting the Christians	47, 48
— Trajan not unfavourably disposed towards the Christians, but afraid of incurring the ill-will of the priesthood and the populace. Note [u] - - - - -	48—50
X. Effects produced by the law of Trajan	49—52
— Martyrdom of Simeon and Ignatius - - - - -	50, 51
— The Christians dissatisfied with Trajan's law on account of its lenity - - - - -	<i>ib.</i>
— Their eagerness after martyrdom repressed by a law - - - - -	52
— Trajan most scrupulously observant of the provisions of his own law. Note [w]	51
XI. State of the Christians under the reign of Hadrian - - - - -	52—54
— The multitude taught to clamour for the persecution of the Christians at the public games and other spectacles	53
— The magistrates dared not disregard this kind of call. Note [y] - - - - -	<i>ib.</i>
XII. Hadrian's new law in favour of the Christians - - - - -	54—56
— Although on a cursory view this law may have the appearance of being more lenient, it probably did not differ materially from the law of Trajan. Note [a]	55
— The suspicion that Hadrian meant to assign Christ a place amongst the Roman deities unfounded. Note [c]	56, 57
XIII. Barchocba an enemy to the Christians	57, 58
A 4	Jeru-

SECT.	PAGE
XIII. Jerufalem finally overthrown, and the city of Ælia Capitolina erected by Hadrian on its ruins - - -	57, 58
XIV. State of the Christians under Antoninus Pius - - -	58—60
— The edict <i>ad commune Afie</i> belongs to this emperor, not to his fucceffor. Note [<i>i</i>] - - -	60, 61
XV. State of the Christians under Marcus Aurelius - - -	61—67
— This philofophic emperor a more malignant perfecutor of the Christians than even Nero or Domitian. Note [<i>k</i>] - - -	62—64
— The enemies of the Christians encouraged to charge them with crimes of the moft horrible nature. Note [<i>l</i>] - - -	<i>ib.</i>
— Infamous conduct of the magiftrates exemplified from what took place during the perfecution at Lyons. Note [<i>m</i>] - - -	65, 66
— The condition of the Christians worfe under the reign of Marcus Aurelius than under that of any of his predecessors. His ill-will towards them not attributable to fuperftition, but to the infinuations of the Stoic philofophers. The contrast drawn by him between the behaviour of a Stoic philofopher and that of a Christian in the article of death. Note [<i>n</i>] - - -	677—0
XVI. Afflictions of the Christians under the reign of Marcus - - -	68—71
— Martyrdom of Juftin, Polycarp, and Pothinus - - -	<i>ib.</i>
— Circumftances attending the perfecution at Lyons. The tenor of the prefident's letter being unknown, an ambiguity is thereby thrown over the emperor's refcript. Note [<i>q</i>] - - -	71—73
XVII. The miracle of the thundering legion - - -	72—75
	Con-

SECT.	PAGE
XVII. Controversy amongst the learned, and particularly between King and Moyle on this subject. An attempt made to place this matter in its proper point of view. Note [r] -	75—82
XVIII. State of the Christians under Commodus and Severus -	76—83
— They are exposed to a dreadful series of calamities and sufferings. Infamous conduct of the magistrates towards them. They are broken in upon even in their sacred assemblies. The punishments inflicted on them to the last degree savage and inhuman. Their dead bodies dug up and torn to pieces by the multitude. Note [u] -	83—85
XIX. Philosophers inimical to the Christian cause - - -	84—88
— Celsus not an Epicurean philosopher but one of the Modern Platonic school. His ideas of Christianity derived from the Gnostics. The fancied improvements of these latter proved highly detrimental to the Christian cause. Note [v] -	86
— Crescens the Cynic philosopher, and Fronto the rhetorician - -	87
— Considerations which probably induced the philosophers to promote the persecution of the Christians. Note [x] - - -	88, 89
XX. Government of the Church	89, 90
XXI. Authority of the Apostolic Churches	90—97
— Two remarkable passages in Irenæus and Tertullian, in which these writers make their appeal to the Apostolic Churches, considered. All the Apostolic Churches are placed by them on a precisely equal footing. Their silence with regard to the	church

SECT.	PAGE
XXI. church of Jerufalem accounted for. Reasons for the difference that is observable between these authors in speaking of the church of Rome. The famous eulogium of Irenæus on the Roman church examined in detail. Note [z]	91—99
XXII. Civil unity introduced amongst the Christians	98—100
— Synods or Councils had their origin in Greece	ib.
— Religion considered by the early Christians as superior to the controul of human laws. Considerable light thrown by a passage in Tertullian, <i>de Fejunis</i> , on the extent to which the power of the primitive Bishops reached. Various particulars to be collected from this author respecting the origin, &c. of councils. Note [a]	100—107
XXIII. Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity	101—110
— A certain degree of independence retained by various churches. Note [b]	108, 109
— Pre-eminence of the Bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria	ib.
— The authority and power of these prelates not unlimited. The rise of the Hierarchy gradual. Note [d]	110
XXIV. Comparifon of the Christian with the Jewish Priesthood	110—112
— Gives rise to the claim of tythes and first-fruits. The Greek and Oriental churches took the lead in urging this claim. Note [f]	ib.
XXV. A taste for philosophy introduced amongst the Christians	113—118
— Justin and other philosophers, upon their embracing Christianity did not abandon their pristine garb and mode	of

SECT.	PAGE
XXV. of life. Note [g] -	113, 114
— The study of philosophy encouraged by Pantænus, Athenagoras, and Clement, successively præfects of the catechetical school at Alexandria. Clement a most zealous defender of the Greek philosophy. The Origin of that disposition to philosophic speculation which began to prevail in the church towards the close of this century may doubtless be referred to the school of Alexandria. Note [b]	114—118
— Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Justin Martyr, &c. although they disclaimed a partiality for any particular philosophic sect, were yet obviously devoted to the tenets of the Eclectics. Note [i] - - -	118, 119
XXVI. Contentions among the Christians with regard to philosophy -	119—123
— The culture of philosophy, logic, and geometry decried by many as heretical. Disputes respecting faith and reason prevailed even at this early period. The arguments by which the cause of philosophy is defended by Clement in his <i>Stromata</i> . The early Christian teachers, by way of gaining over the philosophers to their side encouraged the belief that the difference between Christianity and Philosophy was but trifling. Note [k]	120—125
XXVII. The school of Ammonius Saccas	124—130
— The life and actions of Ammonius involved in great obscurity. The different accounts given of him by Porphyry and Eusebius. Arguments proving that although an apostate in heart he yet never openly seceded from the church. Note [l]	126—129
	He-

SECT.	PAGE
XXVII. Heraclas, unquestionably, one of the pupils of Ammonius. Note [m]	- 129
XXVIII. The philosophy of Ammonius	130—134
——— His favourite object was to bring about a reconciliation between all the different philosophic sects, and to harmonize all religions	- - <i>ib.</i>
——— The sentiments of the Emperor Julian with regard to this. Note [n]	- 130
——— The Ammonian sect referred the origin of all wisdom to the East. The writings of Hermes and the Magic Oracles attributed to Zoroaster, probably forged by the Modern Platonists. Plotinus wished to have completed his studies in Persia and India. False pretensions of the Gnostics detected and exposed by the followers of Ammonius. Note [o]	- - - 131, 132
——— Ammonius and his disciples ambitious of being termed Platonists. Reasons that made them desirous of acquiring for themselves this title. Note [p]	132, 133
XXIX. The theoretical or speculative philosophy of Ammonius.	- 135—138
——— The philosophic system of Ammonius built entirely on the Egyptian discipline. Note [r]	- <i>ib.</i>
——— The discipline of Plato, although it differs from that of the Egyptians in many respects, yet perfectly agrees with it in others. Note [t]	- 137
——— Difference between the Ammonian and Eclectic systems. Note [u]	- 138
XXX. The Moral Philosophy of Ammonius	138—141
——— Abstinence and mortification of the body its leading features	- - 139
——— The frequent occurrence of Christian terms and phrases in the writings of	the

SECT.		PAGE
XXX.	the Modern Platonists accounted for. Note [x] - - -	140
—	That species of science termed by the Modern Platonists <i>Theurgia</i> indisputa- bly of Egyptian origin. Augustin's explanation of it. Note [y] 141—	143
XXXI.	The sentiments of Ammonius respecting the different popular religions. 142—	145
—	The history of the Heathen Deities considered by him as altogether alle- gorical - - -	143
XXXII.	The tenets of Ammonius respecting Christ - - -	145—152
—	Notwithstanding certain individual in- stances that may be cited to the con- trary, the character of Christ was held in great esteem by Ammonius and his followers. Our Saviour con- sidered by them as a Theurgist or magician of the first rank. His character extolled by the Pagan oracles. According to the Plato- nists, he did not abolish, but merely reformed the worship, of the Heathen deities. Note [b] 145—	150
—	Great address manifested by the mo- dern Platonists in reconciling the Egyptian and Platonic philosophy with the religion of Christ. Note [c] - - -	150, 151
—	Customary for them to compare our blessed Saviour with Apollonius Ty- anaxus, Pythagoras, and other emi- nent philosophers. Note [d] 152	152
XXXIII.	Forced interpretations of the Scrip- tures - - -	153—155
—	Four senses of Scripture noticed by the Fathers of this century, viz. the literal, the allegorical, the tropolo- gical, and the anagogical. Note [e] - - -	153, 154 Most

SECT.	PAGE
XXXIII. Most of the early corruptions of Christianity had their origin in Egypt. This country also gave birth to the practice of straining passages of Scripture in support of philosophical maxims. Specimens of the manner in which Pantænus and Clement of Alexandria were accustomed to expound the Scriptures. The allegorical interpretation of Scripture a favourite practice with Philo Judæus, as also with the Pharisees and Essenes before his time. Note [f]	155—159
XXXIV. The practice arises of expounding Christian tenets upon philosophical principles. The secret discipline	156—161
——— Endeavours used to reconcile what is laid down in Scripture as to certain leading points of Christian belief, with the doctrine of Plato, Parmenides, and other eminent philosophers. Note [g]	159, 160
——— There existed amongst the ancient Christians not merely one but divers species of secret discipline. These different kinds of secret discipline enumerated and described. Note [b]	160—171
——— The secret discipline of a more comprehensive nature than the mystical theology. This latter appears to have comprised merely the best and noblest part of the secret discipline. Note [i]	161
XXXV. Moral Theology assumes a two-fold character	162—181
——— The first rise of the Ascetics not clearly to be ascertained. The earliest were probably those who merely renounced marriage. None of the	

rest

SECT.		PAGE
XXXV.	rest can be placed higher than this century. It is by no means certain that the Ascetics were accustomed to distinguish themselves from other Christians by their drefs. Note [k] - - - - -	171—174
—	Mytics and Mysticifm had their origin long prior to the Christian æra. The myftic difcipline arofe out of the ancient philofophy of the Egyptians, and was countenanced by the doctrine of Plato. The sentiments of Philo Judæus in perfect harmony with thofe of the Myftics of more recent times. The Christians become divided into “Operants” and “Quietfcents.” The influence which country and climate have on men’s morals and opinions. Mysticifm the offspring of a burning climate. Note [l] - - - - -	174—181
—	Difference between Monks and the early Ascetics. Origin of monafteries and abbeys, anchorites or hermits, &c. The temperate climate of Europe unfriendly to Monachifm. Note [m] - - - - -	181—184
XXXVI.	Alteration in the form of divine worfhip - - - - -	181—187
—	Various terms or phrafes made ufe of in the Heathen myfteries transferred and applied to different parts of the Christian worfhip. Clement of Alexandria particularly fond of placing the rites of Chriftianity on a parallel with the Heathen myfteries. The application of the term “Symbolum” to the Chriftian profefion of faith, accounted for in this way. Note [n] - - - - -	186, 187
—	The adoption of Heathen rites, &c. by the	

SECT.		PAGE
XXXVI.	the Christians offers a wide field for the display of literary talent. List of authors by whom the subject has been incidentally noticed. Causes that probably influenced the Christians in their adoption of these rites.	
	Note [o] - - -	187, 188
XXXVII.	Christian writers of this century	188—192
—	Principal editions of the works of Irenæus. Note [p] - -	189
—	Principal editions of the works of Justin Martyr. Note [q] -	<i>ibid.</i>
—	Principal editions of the works of Clement of Alexandria. Note [r]	190
—	Principal editions of the works of Theophilus, Tatian, and Athenagoras. Note [s] - - -	191
—	Principal editions of the works of Tertullian. Note [t] - -	192
XXXVIII.	Rise and propagation of Christian sects. Judaizing Christians	192, 193
—	Reasons which probably induced the greater part of the Christians of Jewish origin under the reign of Hadrian to renounce altogether the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and elect one Marcus for their bishop.	
	Note [u] - - -	193—198
XXXIX.	The Nazarenes and Ebionites.	194—202
—	The Gospel of the Nazarenes not the same with that of the Ebionites.	
	Note [v] - - -	198
—	By the early writers, the Nazarenes are not spoken of as heretics. Whether the Nazarenes were anciently included under the denomination of Ebionites? The term "Nazarene" of a similar import with Christian.	
	Note [w] - - -	199, 200
—	What opinion the Nazarenes entertained	

SECT.	PAGE
XXXIX. tained respecting Christ, not altogether clear. Note [x] - -	201
—— The Nazarenes considered no part of the Jewish law as obligatory, except the genuine Mosaic precepts. Their great veneration for St. Paul shews them not to have considered the Mosaic law as of general or perpetual obligation. Note [y] -	202
XL. The Ebionites - -	202—204
—— Origin of the term “Ebionites” uncertain. Probable that it had an allusion to the poverty or indigence of those by whom the sect was founded. Note [z] - - -	202, 203
—— The Ebionites observed not only the Mosaic precepts, but also the ordinances engrafted thereon by the Pharisees and Doctors of the Law. The sense in which we ought to understand what is said by Irenæus of their having worshipped the city of Jerusalem. Note [a] -	204
XLI. Sects generated of the Oriental philosophy - - -	205—207
—— The Gnostic sects did not emerge from obscurity until the reign of Hadrian. Note [b] - - - -	206
—— The cause of Christianity sustained no little injury from its being believed by the Greeks and Romans that the maxims and tenets of the Gnostics were those of the Christians at large. Note [c] - - - -	207
XLII. Of the Gnostic sects - -	208, 209
—— The Gnostic sects in all probability less numerous than they are represented to have been by the ancient Christian writers. Note [d] -	<i>ibid.</i>
XLIII. The Elcesaites - - -	210
VOL. II. a	XLIV. The

SECT.	PAGE
XLIV. The philosophy of Saturninus	211—216
——— Saturninus was not a disciple of Menander. Note [<i>f</i>]	- - 211
——— The accounts given by ancient writers of the discipline of Saturninus confused and obscure. An attempt to correct and overcome the errors and difficulties to which these imperfect accounts have given rise. Note [<i>g</i>]	- - - - 213—215
——— Saturninus the first of the Gnostics that divided mankind into two classes; the one good, the other evil. Note [<i>b</i>]	- - 215, 216
XLV. The Saturninian system of Theology	- - - - 216—220
——— The orthodox Christians agreed with the Gnostics in assigning to the Heathen deities a real existence; but differed from them with regard to the spiritual agents by whom mankind were seduced from their allegiance to the Supreme Deity. Note [<i>i</i>]	- - - 216, 217
——— Various consecrations with regard to the doctrine of Saturninus deducible from what is handed down to us respecting his tenets. Note [<i>k</i>]	- - - - 217, 218
——— Improbable that Saturninus should have interdicted marriage and prescribed an equal degree of abstinence and mortification to all his disciples. Note [<i>l</i>]	- - - 219
XLVI. The philosophy of Basilides	220—235
——— Of the writings and character of Basilides; the time when he flourished; and the authors from whom information respecting him is to be collected. He was not a disciple of Menander. Note [<i>m</i>]	- 220, 221
	XLVI. He

SECT.	PAGE
XLVI. He did not consider matter as having a ruler peculiar to itself; nor did he believe in the existence of angels naturally inclined to evil. Note [n] - - - - -	222
—— His Æons cannot properly be regarded in any other light than as real and distinct persons. With respect to their sexes and intermarriages, he seems to have entertained sentiments equally gross with others of the Gnostics. Note [o] - - - - -	222—224
—— However absurd it may appear, there can be no doubt but that Basilides believed in the existence of 365 heavens and an equal number of angelic orders. Note [p] - - - - -	224, 225
—— Of the name "Abraxas" or "Abrafax." Not stated by any ancient writer that this name was first invented by Basilides. Its meaning involved in great obscurity. The letters composing it express the number 365. It appears to have been applied by Basilides to the Supreme Lord of all the heavens. Chifflet, Beaufobre, and Jablonky, wrong in imagining that it meant the sun. Abraxas could have been none other than the first and greatest of the angels supposed to have been generated of Sophia and Dynamis. Both this name and what are commonly termed Basilidian gems were probably of Egyptian origin. Note [q] - - - - -	225—232
—— In what respects Basilides and certain of the Gnostics differed in opinion from the rest with regard to the founder of this world. Note [r] <i>ibid.</i>	
—— Basilides believed man to be possessed of two souls: the one brutal, the other rational. The manner in	
a 2	XLVI. which

SECT.		PAGE
XLVI.	which he accounted for the association of divine or rational souls with gross material bodies. Note [r]	233, 234
— —	The Basilidians pretended to be in possession of the prophecies of Cham, and the discourses of Barcabba and Barcophus, and other similar writings. Note [t]	235
XLVII.	The Basilidian system of theology	235—243
— — —	That this world is governed by angels, and that each nation or kingdom hath its presiding or ruling angel, a very ancient opinion amongst the people of the East. Note [v]	236
— — —	Want of harmony between Irenæus and Clement of Alexandria with regard to the tenets of Basilides respecting Christ. Clement the best deserving of credit. Note [w]	238—243
— — —	Basilides had not a peculiar Gospel of his own. What parts of the New Testament were approved of by him, and what he rejected. He considered Christ as having propounded a two-fold discipline. Note [x] - - - -	243, 244
XLVIII.	The moral doctrine of Basilides	244—247
— — —	That Basilides should have recognised no distinction between good and bad actions, but countenanced his followers in every species of licentiousness, entirely undeserving of credit. His words on the contrary as quoted by Clement of Alexandria argue a great strictness in point of morals. Note [y] - -	245
— — —	The dissolute conduct of certain of the Basilidians not imputable to the doctrine or precepts of their master. Note [z] - - -	245, 246
	XLVIII. The	

SECT.	PAGE
XLVIII. The dissolute conduct of certain of the Basilidians not imputable to the doctrine or precepts of their master.	
Note [z] - - -	245, 246
—— The opinion of Basilides respecting the martyrs, excited considerable animosity towards him amongst the orthodox Christians. A particular investigation of the Basilidian doctrine with regard to concealing one's religion, and even denying Christ in times of persecution, partaking of meats offered to idols, avoiding martyrdom, &c. Note [a]	246—250
XLIX. The system of Carpocrates -	248—252
—— What the sentiments of Carpocrates were respecting the soul, very obscure and uncertain. There is reason to think that in some respects they were very extraordinary and far different from those entertained by the Gnostics. Note [c] -	251, 252
L. The Carpocratian theology	253—259
—— The notion that Carpocrates thought less respectfully of Christ than any others of the Gnostics erroneous. The Carpocratian sentiments with regard to Christ as stated by Irenæus examined in detail. Note [d]	253—258
LI. The moral discipline of Carpocrates	259—265
—— There is a difficulty in believing that the moral doctrine of Carpocrates could have been so infamously gross and vile as it is represented by ancient writers. Possibly we may be strangers to certain particulars by which its apparent enormity might be greatly qualified. Note [e]	259—263
—— The apotheosis of Epiphanes the son of Carpocrates, by the people of	
a 3	LI. Sama,

SECT.	PAGE
LI. Sama, in all probability a mere fable. Note [<i>f</i>] -	263—265
— Carpocrates maintained that his doctrine was built on the secret communications of Christ to his disciples. He of course entertained no very high respect for the writings of the New Testament. Note [<i>g</i>] - - -	265, 266
LII. The system of Valentine -	266—268
— Notwithstanding the very great attention bestowed on it by ancient writers, the Valentinian system is but partially intelligible. Valentine is said to have been the pupil of Theodas, one of St. Paul's disciples. Note [<i>h</i>] - - -	266, 267
— It was not the disappointment of his hopes with regard to a bishopric, but the severity of the Roman church that made Valentine a sectary. Note [<i>i</i>] -	268—270
LIII. The Valentinian Æons -	269—276
— Great difference of opinion has prevailed amongst the learned with regard to the source from whence the Valentinian religion and philosophy were derived. Valentine was unquestionably indebted for the first elements of his system to the Oriental philosophy. Note [<i>k</i>] -	270, 271
— In what respects Valentine differed from the various other leaders of Gnostic sects. With him the study of Christianity preceded that of philosophy: with them the case had been exactly the reverse. Some curious specimens of the mode in which he supported certain parts of his system by a reference to the New Testament. Note [<i>l</i>] -	272, 273
LIII. Endeavours	

SECT.	PAGE
LIII. Endeavours of the learned to hit upon some interpretation of the Valentinian principles and tenets, that might reconcile them with reason and Christianity. The attempt altogether an hopeless one. The Valentinian Æons, like those of the other Gnostic sects, can be considered in no other light than as real and distinct persons. Note [m]	276—279
LIV. } The Valentinian Theology	277—285
LV. }	
— The Deity was considered by all descriptions of the Gnostics and particularly by the Valentinians, as possessed of merely a limited degree of intelligence and power. They also believed him to be destitute of various qualities which right reason and the Scriptures point out as belonging to the Supreme Being. That the Æons therefore should not have been deemed perfect can of course excite no surprise. Note [n] -	280
— Achamoth not regarded by Valentine as the parent of matter, but merely as the author of certain modifications thereof. Note [p] -	283, 284
LVI. The Valentinian tenets respecting the Creation - - -	285, 286
— Man, according to Valentine, compounded of a two-fold body and also of a two-fold soul. The Valentinians, like other Gnostics, denied the possibility of a future resurrection of the body. The rational soul they held to be of necessity immortal. The fate of the sensitive soul depended on circumstances. Note [r] -	286—288
a 4	LVII. The

SECT.	PAGE
LVII. The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ - - - - -	287—294
The body assumed by Christ according to the Valentinians was different from that of an ordinary man. Christ, although considered by them as a spiritual being of the most exalted kind, yet not placed on an equal footing with the Father. They must have believed him to have actually suffered, and died. Note [u] - - - - -	289—291
— Valentine did not believe in Christ's having expiated the sins of man- kind by his death; but asserted that the only purpose of his advent was to communicate to our benighted race a knowledge of the true God. Note [v] - - - - -	292
— The Valentinian system agrees per- fectly in not a few particulars with that of the Manichees. A sum- mary or general view of the doc- trine inculcated by the Oriental, the Gnostic, and the Manichæan schemes. Note [w] - - - - -	293, 294
— The statements of ancient authors with regard to the wickedness and crimes of the Valentinians, not applicable to the sect in general. Valentine considered all men to be by nature equal; and the gate of salvation as irrevocably closed against none. His distribution of men into three classes explained. Note [x] - - - - -	294—297
LVIII. Inferior sects that owed their origin to the Valentinian school - - - - -	295—299
— The belief, that the Supreme Being was not the author of the Jewish Law, confined to no one sect of the Gnostics in particular, but indiscrimi- nately	LVIII. minately

SECT.		PAGE
LVIII.	minutely recognized by them all.	
	Note [y] - - - - -	298
—	Difference of opinion between Ptolemy and Secundus with regard to the nature of the Æons. Note [z]	99
LIX.	Marcus and Colarbasus - - - - -	300, 301
—	The tenets of Marcus prove him to have been a man entirely out of his wits. A specimen of his idle conceits respecting the force and properties of the Greek letters. Prayers dictated by the Marcians to dying people, nearly similar to those of the Ophites. That Marcus should have practised forcery, or had recourse to any delusive tricks, is undeserving of the smallest credit. What is recorded of his changing the colour of the sacramental wine, as also, of his filling the larger chalice from a smaller one, may readily be accounted for without supposing him to have used any deception. Note [b] - - - - -	301—306
LX.	Bardefanes - - - - -	302—311
—	Notwithstanding the frequency with which the subject is adverted to by ancient writers, the history of the life and tenets of Bardefanes has come down to us involved in great uncertainty and doubt. Note [c]	307
—	Although he eventually renounced certain of his errors, he yet never thoroughly repudiated his heretical opinions. Note [d] - - - - -	308
—	His opinion respecting the origin of the world and of mankind was different from that of Valentine and every other Gnostic leader. Note [e] <i>ibid.</i>	
—	Certain particulars with regard to which the doctrine of Bardefanes appears	

SECT.	PAGE
LX. to have been hitherto misunderstood. Note [<i>f</i>] - -	309—310
LXI. Tatian - - - -	311—314
— His system possessed somewhat of the Valentinian character, but its exact nature is not to be collected from any author - - -	312
— His history undeservedly slighted by ancient writers. Note [<i>i</i>] -	<i>ibid.</i>
— The austerity of his moral discipline reached to the extent of enjoining the substitution of water for wine in the administration of the Eucharist	313
— A dislike to wine prevalent amongst the philosophers of the East from a very remote period. In prohibiting the use of it, Mohammed merely enforced the observance of an ancient regulation. Note [<i>l</i>] - -	<i>ibid.</i>
— The naturally austere disposition of the Syrians rendered them particularly friendly to the system of Tatian. Note [<i>m</i>] - - - -	314
LXII. The Ophites or Serpentinians	314—317
— Questionable how far various minor Gnostic sects that are spoken of by ancient writers, such as the Cassianites, the Docetes, the Severians, the Apostolics, the Adamites, the Cainites, the Abelites, the Sethians, and the Florinians, had any real or distinct existence. Note [<i>n</i>] - - -	315, 316
LXIII. Cerdo and Marcion - - -	318—322
— All the accounts to be met with in ancient writers respecting these Hæresarchs very defective. The principal sources from whence information as to them is to be derived. Note [<i>p</i>] - - - -	318, 319
— What is said by Epiphanius, of Marcion's having been excommunicated	LXIII. for

SECT.	PAGE
LXIII.	for the seduction of a virgin, ought in all probability to be understood figuratively. Note [q] - 319—321
————	Marcion's exposition of our Saviour's words respecting the not putting of new wine into old bottles. Note [r] - - - - - <i>ibid.</i>
LXIV.	The system of Marcion - 322—326
————	Nothing beyond its leading features can now be ascertained. It appears to have borne a strong resemblance to the discipline of the Manichees. Note [t] - - - - 323, 324
————	The founder of this universe was considered by Marcion as a being entirely distinct from both the good and the evil deity. This Being he characterized by the epithet <i>Jußt</i> . Note [u] - - - - 324, 325
————	An attempt to supply certain particulars in the system of Marcion, not noticed by ancient writers: Note [v] - - - - 326
LXV.	The tenets of Marcion respecting Christ - - - - 326—331
————	Marcion admitted that the advent of a Messiah was predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament, and that such Messiah would one day or other make his appearance; but denied that our blessed Saviour was the Messiah alluded to, and asserted that, in proclaiming himself as such, Christ had practised a deception. Note [x] - - - - 327—329
————	He denied that Christ either suffered or died any otherwise than in appearance; but affirmed, that such his apparent death was beneficial to the human race. The Marcionites set no value on life, and LXV. were

SECT.	PAGE
LXV. were distinguished for the number and courage of their martyrs. Note [y] - - - - -	330
— The very singular tenets of Marcion with regard to Christ's descent into hell. Note [z] - - - - -	330, 331
— Two courses of moral discipline recognized by the generality of the Gnostic sects. A summary view of the chief points in regard to which these sects were either agreed or at variance. Note [a] - - - - -	331—333
LXVI. The heresy of Montanus - - - - -	332—339
— Tertullian's testimony with regard to Montanus must be received with some caution. The history of the Montanists involved in much confusion and obscurity. The learned much divided in opinion as to the time of the origination of this sect. An attempt to place the character of Montanus in its proper point of view. Note [b] - - - - -	333—335
— Although Montanus appears to have been disordered in his mind, it is scarcely credible that he could have been so infatuated as to pretend that the Holy Ghost was resident in his person, or that his body was actually animated by the Holy Spirit in the place of a soul. Note [c] - - - - -	336
— The bishop of Rome (Victor), until undeceived by Praxeas, regarded Montanus in the light of a genuine prophet. Note [d] - - - - -	337
— The sect of the Montanists had not become extinct even so low down as the 5th century. A list of imperial edicts relating to them. Note [e] - - - - -	338
— In his vindication of Montanus, Tertullian may rather be considered	LXVI. as

SECT.	PAGE
LXVI. as the advocate of himself and his own opinions. Note [f]	- 339
LXVII. The errors of Montanus	339—352
—— The opinions of Montanus appear to have been perfectly orthodox with regard to the leading principles of Christianity. His errors however were far from being of a light or trivial nature. He asserted that Christ and his apostles had left the moral law incomplete, and that he himself was commissioned of God to bring it to perfection. There are no grounds for charging him with Sabellianism. Note [g]	339—344
—— The improvements in moral discipline suggested by him, related merely to a greater strictness in point of external demeanor. An investigation of these improvements in detail. All of them were manifestly of a light and trifling nature. The Christians did not take exception so much to his precepts in themselves as to the importance which he attached to them. Note [b]	344—348
—— It was not his assuming the character of a prophet that caused the separation between Montanus and the Catholic Christians, but their believing him to be inspired of the devil. Their reasons for thinking thus of him. Montanus asserted that he and his followers constituted the only true church, and that every other was at enmity with God and the Holy Spirit. Note [i]	349—352
—— The prophecy of Montanus respecting the future judgment, which the Catholic Christians appear to have been particularly anxious to mark	LXVII. with

SECT.		PAGE.
LXVII.	with their disapprobation, could not have related to the last general judgment, but must have pointed at the overthrow of the Roman Empire. Note [<i>k</i>] - - -	352—355
LXVIII.	Praxeas - - -	353—362
—	For the history of Praxeas, we are of necessity constrained to rely wholly on Tertullian, his most inveterate enemy. It is not improbable that the error of Praxeas might have originated in his hostility to Montanus. Note [<i>l</i>] - - -	355, 356
—	Praxeas denied the existence of any real distinction of persons in the Godhead. A particular investigation of his tenets with regard to the divine nature. Note [<i>m</i>] - - -	357—362
LXIX.	Theodotus and Artemon - - -	362—365
—	Ancient writers are far from being agreed in their exposition of the tenets of Theodotus respecting Christ. It is by no means placed beyond a doubt, that Theodotus and Artemon entertained one and the same opinion on this subject. Note [<i>o</i>] - - -	363, 364
LXX.	Hermogenes - - -	365—369
—	The doctrine of Hermogenes respecting the eternity of matter not properly encountered by Tertullian. Although the former considered matter as coeval with the Deity; he nevertheless maintained that the Deity had from all eternity ruled over it. Note [<i>p</i>] - - -	367, 368
—	The opinion of Hermogenes that the souls of men as well as their bodies were composed of matter, accounted for on the ground of his believing matter to be the source of every evil desire. Note [<i>q</i>] - - -	368, 369
		LXX. It

SECT.	PAGE
LXX.	It is acknowledged even by Tertullian, that the tenets of Hermogenes respecting Christ, were found and orthodox. This heresiarch appears to have been a different person from the Hermogenes mentioned by Clement of Alexandria in his <i>Eclogæ Prophetica</i> , as also from that Hermogenes against whom Theophilus of Antioch and Origen wrote. Note [u] - - - - - 369
LXXI.	} Controversy respecting the Paschal observances - - - - - 370—388
LXXII.	
—	The causes and nature of this controversy have been very generally misunderstood. The main point in dispute was the propriety of the Christians partaking of a Paschal supper on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month in commemoration of Christ's eating the Passover with his disciples. Previously to the council of Nice the term <i>Pascha</i> had a different meaning from what it has borne since. An attempt to place the nature of this controversy in a just and perspicuous point of view. Note [v.] - - - - - 371—384
—	Correction of an error in Valefius's translation of the words of Eusebius respecting Victor's excommunication of the Asiatic Christians. The bishop of Rome did not at that time possess the power of cutting off whom he pleased from all communion with the church at large. Victor's excommunication of the Christians of Asia Minor extended merely to the exclusion of them from all LXXII. commu-

SECT.	PAGE
LXXII.	communion with himself and the church of Rome. His example was not followed by the other bishops.
Note [z.]	- - - 385—388

ERRATA.

- Page 15, in margin, for *Germany*, read *German*.
 — 28, line 25, after γίνεται, add ἡ γὰρ φυτιθῆσα ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμπιλος καὶ σωτῆρος χριστοῦ ὁ λαὸς αὐτῶ ἐστὶ
 — 49, — 31, dele *be*.
 — 61, — 37, for *Christian*, read *Christians*.
 — 66, — 38, for *the*, read *they*.
 — 67, — 33, for *severity*, read *serenity*.
 — 165, — 9, for *set*, read *sed*.
 — 166, in margin, for *assume*, read *assumes*.
 — 167, *ibid.* for *more*, read *moral*.
 — 171, line 32, for *celebracy*, read *celibacy*.
 — 172, — 19, for *countenancing*, read *counteraacting*.
 — 173, — 22, for *such of, them*, read *such of them*.
 — 178, — 35, for *Egyptians*, read *Egyptians*.
 — 183, — 22, for *alife*, read *a life*.
 — 189, — 13, for *hereses*, read *hæreses*.
 — 225, — 10, for *in the mind*, read *into the mind*.
 — 307, — 22, for *Wetfen*, read *Wetsten*.
 — 359, line antepenult. for βλασφημῆσαι, read βλασφημησαι.
 Passim, for *intrinsically*, read *intrinsically*.

THE
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY
OF THE
SECOND CENTURY.

I. **T**HE Christian religion, which in the course of the former age had made its way throughout a considerable portion of the world, and pervaded nearly the whole of the Roman empire, was, in the century on which we are now about to enter, by the zeal and incredible exertions of its teachers, still more widely diffused, and propagated even amongst those nations, which on account of their ferocity and the loathsomeness of their manners were justly regarded with horror by the rest. Being destitute of any documents on the subject that can properly be relied on, it is impossible for us, with any degree of exactness, to specify, either the time, circumstances, or immediate authors, of this further diffusion of the blessings of the gospel, or particularly to distinguish the provinces which had hitherto remained uncheered by, and now first received, the light of celestial truth, from those to which it had been communicated in the former century. We must rest satisfied therefore with being able to ascertain, in a general way, from the unexceptionable testimony of writers of these and the following

C E N T.
II.

Propagati-
on of the
Christian
religion.

C E N T.
II.Propaga-
tion of the
Christian
religion.

times, that the limits of the church of Christ were, in this age, extended most widely; in so much indeed, as to make them correspond very nearly with the confines of the then known habitable world [a].

II. The

[a] Some very striking passages respecting the amplitude and extent of the Christian community, are to be met with in the works of those most excellent writers of the second century, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Tertullian, writers, of whom it is not too much to say, that they are, in general, most deserving of unlimited credit. εἰ δὲ ἐν says Justin, (*Dialog. cum Tryphone*, p. 341. edit. Jebbian.) γὰρ ὅλως ἐστὶ τὸ γένος ἀνθρώπων, εἴτε βαρβάρων, εἴτε Ἑλλήνων, εἴτε ἀπλῶς ὀτινῶν ὀνόματι πρόσταγορευμένων, ἢ ἀμαζόσιων, ἢ αἰοίκων καλεσμένων, ἢ ἐν σκηναῖς κτηνοτρόφων ἐκέντων, ἐν οἷς μὴ διὰ τῆ ὀνόματος τῆ σαυρωθέντος Ἰησοῦ, εὐχαὶ καὶ εὐχαρισταὶ τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ποιητῇ τῶν ὅλων γίνονται. *Ne unum quidem est genus mortaliū, sive barbarorum, sive Græcorum, seu etiam aliorum omnium, quocumque appellentur nomine, vel in plaustris degentium, vel domo carentium, vel in tentoriis viventium, et pecoribus vitam tolerantium, inter quos per nomen crucifixi Jesu supplicationes, et gratiarum actiones patri et fabricatori omnium non fiant.*—Subsequently, at p. 351. he again expresses himself much to the same purport, though in fewer words. Now admitting, what indeed is too obvious to be denied, that there is in this somewhat of exaggeration, since long after the age of Justin, there were many nations of the earth, which had not been brought to a knowledge of Christ, still there could have been no room for this very exaggeration, had not the Christian religion been at that time most extensively diffused throughout the world. Irenæus, disputing with the Valentinians, (*lib. i. adv. Hæres. cap. x. p. 48. edit. Massuet.*) opposes to them the entire Christian church, which he represents as extended throughout the whole world, even to the uttermost bounds of the earth. From this immense multitude of Christians in the general, he then selects certain particular churches widely separated from each other in point of situation, and sets them in opposition to his adversaries. Καὶ ἔτε αἱ ἐν Γερμανίαις ἰδρυμέναὶ ἐκκλησίαι ἄλλως πεπιστεύασιν, ἢ ἄλλως παραδιδόασιν, ἔτε ἐν ταῖς Ἰβηρίαις, ἔτε ἐν Κελτοῖς, ἔτε κατὰ τὰς ἀνατολάς, ἔτε ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ, ἔτε ἐν Λιβύῃ, ἔτε αἱ κατὰ μέσα τῷ κόσμῳ ἰδρυμένα. *Ac neque hæ quæ in Germaniis sitæ sunt Ecclesiæ aliter credunt,*

II. The name of one of those, however, who devoted themselves to the propagation of the gospel

C E N T.
II.
Mission of
Pautienus to
India.

credunt, aut aliter tradunt, nec quæ in Hiberiis, aut Celtis, neque hæ quæ in oriente, neque hæ quæ in Ægypto, neque hæ quæ in Libya, neque hæ quæ in medio mundi constitutæ. In support of the doctrine then for which he is contending, we see Irenæus here calls to witness churches from all the three grand divisions of the world which were at that time known. From Europe, the Germanic, the Iberian or Spanish, and the Celtic or Gaulish. He himself lived amongst the Celts, and was a near neighbour to the Germans and Iberians; and must consequently have been most intimately acquainted with the situation of Christian affairs in those parts. From Asia he adduces the churches of the East, by which I conceive him to mean those which had been planted at the eastern extremity of Asia. Finally, from Africa he calls to his support, the churches of Egypt and Libya. To what churches he alludes when he speaks of those “situated in the centre of the world,” it is not very easy to say. The commentators on Irenæus would have us to understand him as having in view the churches of Palestine, since it appears that anciently Palestine was, by some, considered as situated in the centre of the world. How far this may be just I am unable to say. Possibly the world *κοσμος*, or world, might be put by Irenæus, as it is by others of the ancient writers, for the Roman empire. Annexing this sense to the word, the centre of the world would be Italy, which was as it were the heart of the Roman empire. Another interpretation has been offered to the world by Gabriel Liron, a learned monk, of the order of the Benedictines, (*Singularités Historiques et Littéraires*, tom. iv. p. 197.) who supposes that by the centre of the world was meant Asia Minor, Greece, Thrace, Illyricum, Pannonia, Italy and the Isles; in short all those parts which were surrounded by the countries which he had before enumerated. Tertullian gives a more copious list than Irenæus, of the nations that had embraced Christianity, although perhaps less to be depended on. *In quem enim alium*, says he, (in lib. *adv. Judæos*, c. vii. p. 212. edit. Rigalt.) *universæ gentes crediderunt, nisi in Christum qui jam venit? Cui enim et, (there seems to be some deficiency or corruption of the text in this place,) alia gentes crediderunt: Parthi, Medi, Elamitæ, et qui inhabitant*

C E N T.
II.Mission of
Pantænus
to India.

pel amongst the nations of the east, has been transmitted to posterity, viz. that of Pantænus, a man of

litant Mesopotamiam, Armeniam, Phrygiam, Cappadociam, et incolentes Pontum, et Asiam, et Pamphyliam: immorantes Ægyptum, et regionem Africæ quæ est trans Cyrenem inhabitantes? Romani et incolæ; tunc et in Hierusalem Judæi et cæteræ gentes: ut jam Getulorum varietates, et Maurorum multi fines: Hispaniarum omnes termini, et Galliarum diversæ nationes, et Britannorum inaccessa Romanis loca, Christo vero subdita, et Sarmatarum, et Dacorum, et Germanorum, et Scytharum, et abditarum multarum gentium et provinciarum et insularum multarum nobis ignotarum, et quæ enumerare minus possumus: in quibus omnibus locis Christi nomen, qui jam venit, regnat. Considering this passage as perfectly explicit, and every way worthy of credit, various of the learned have not hesitated on the faith of it, to pronounce that the Christian religion had, at this time obtained for itself a footing in all the different nations here enumerated. For my own part were I to follow them in this, it would not be without a strong apprehension that I might plunge myself into difficulties not easily to be surmounted. In fact, it appears to me, that Tertullian puts on here a little of the rhetorician, as he does in many other parts of his writings, and relates some things which it should strangely puzzle me, or any one else to demonstrate. In the first place, it is to be remarked, that the middle part of the above passage is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, and that, with the exception of the Armenians, it exhibits a catalogue of precisely the same nations as are enumerated by the Jews who had heard the Apostles speak in foreign tongues, Acts, ii. 8, 9, From what the Jews are there recorded to have said, Tertullian seems to have conceived what carries on its very face the marks of absurdity, namely, that all the nations of whom those devout Jews there make mention, were at once induced to embrace the Christian faith. It is next observable, that what Tertullian here says of Christianity having in his time been professed by divers nations of the Gauls, is directly contrary to the fact. In the time of Tertullian, the church of Gaul had attained to no degree of strength or size, but was quite in its infancy, and confined within the limits of one individual nation, as the inhabitants of the country themselves acknowledge. What he adds about Christ being acknowledged in those parts of Britain
to

of eminent abilities, and one by whom the cause of Christianity was, in various ways, considerably benefited. Having applied himself with diligence to the cultivation of letters and philosophy, and presided for a while with distinguished credit over the Christian school at Alexandria, he at length, either on the suggestion of his own mind, or by the command of Demetrius his bishop, engaged in a mission to the Indians, who had about this time manifested a wish for Christian instruction, and communicated to them that saving knowledge, of which they stood in need. To which of the many nations comprehended by the ancients, under the general title of Indians, it was that Pantænus thus went, has been made the subject of dispute. My own opinion is, that this mission originated in an application made to the bishop of Alexandria by certain Jews who were settled in Arabia Felix, and who had been originally converted to Christianity by Bartholomew, requesting that a teacher might be sent them for the purpose of renovating and keeping alive amongst them the true religion, which for want of such assistance had gone much to decay, and was visibly every day still further on the decline.

C E N T.
II.Mission of
Pantænus
to India.

to which the Roman arms had not penetrated, is still wider removed from the truth. Finally, his asserting that many unexplored nations and unknown islands and provinces had embraced Christianity, most plainly evinces that he suffered himself to be carried away by the warmth of imagination, and did not sufficiently attend to what he was committing to paper. For how could it be possible that Tertullian should have been brought acquainted with what was done in unexplored regions and unknown islands and provinces? In fact, instead of feeling his way by means of certain and approved testimony, he appears, in this instance, to have become the dupe of vague and indistinct rumour.

C E N T.
 II.
 Mission of
 Pantænus
 to India.

If this conjecture of mine be well founded, it must of necessity follow, that those are in an error who conceive that India obtained her first knowledge of the Gospel through Pantænus [b].

III. Turning

[b] For whatever we know of the sacred legation of Pantænus to the Indians, we are indebted to Eusebius and Jerome; between whom, however, there is some little difference of narration respecting it. By the former, in his *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. x. p. 175. Pantænus is represented as having, on the suggestion of his own mind, undertaken a journey amongst the people of the east, for the purpose of converting them to Christianity, and to have extended his travels even as far as the Indians. The latter, in his *Catal. Scriptor. Ecclesiast.* cap. xxxvi. p. 107. ed. Fabric. & *Epistol.* lxxxiii. p. 656. tom. iv. opp. part ii. ed. Benedict. reports that certain delegates had been dispatched by the Indians to Alexandria, requesting of Demetrius the bishop of that city, that a Christian instructor might be sent them; and that Demetrius acceding to their wishes, directed Pantænus the prefect of the Alexandrian school to accompany those men on their return. If then we give credit to Eusebius, we must understand Pantænus as having voluntarily, and purely out of love towards God, undertaken the labour of disseminating a knowledge of the gospel amongst divers of the barbarous nations of the east, including even the Indians: if on the contrary we take Jerome for our guide, it should seem that he was sent by his bishop on a special mission to the Indians, and to none besides. Possibly it may not be very difficult to bring about a reconciliation between these two accounts. Pantænus had, probably at the instigation of his own mind, gone forth with a view to the conversion of some of the more neighbouring nations, and, perhaps met with some success. Whilst he was thus employed, the Indian delegates, in all likelihood, arrived at Alexandria, requesting that a Christian instructor might be sent to their countrymen; and Demetrius having received the most ample testimony of his knowledge, faith, and zeal, pitched upon this same Pantænus as the most proper person to accompany them on their return. But since it is well known that the Greek and Latin writers gave the title of Indians to many of the more remote eastern nations,

III. Turning to the European provinces, we find it acknowledged by the best informed French

C E N T.
II.

Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

nations, of whom little or nothing was known, and also occasionally made use of the term to denote the Persians, Parthians, Medes, Ethiopians, Libyans, Arabians, and others, as is not unusual with us at this day, the learned have made it a question what Indians those were to whom a knowledge of the gospel was imparted by Pantæus. Most of them imagine that the scene of his labours must have been the country of India Magna which is watered by the Indus, and which we now term Eastern India: an opinion that seems to be countenanced by Jerome, who says that Pantæus was sent to the Brachmans. *Missus est* says he, in his 83d Epistle *in Indiam ut Christum apud Brachmanas et illius gentis philosophos prædicaret*. For Brachmans or Bramins is the title by which the wise men of India Magna are distinguished to this day; but by the ancients the term Brachmanus was applied in a manner equally vague and ambiguous with that of Indians, and it appears to be not at all unlikely that Jerome might, in this instance, have no authority but his own fancy for what he said. Those illustrious scholars, Hen. Valesius, L. Holstenius, and others, have therefore rather thought that it was to the Abyssinians or Ethiopians that Pantæus went, since the appellation of Indians, (a title which they are still fond of retaining) was given also to these people by the ancients: and in addition to this, they are as it were, next door neighbours to the Egyptians, and keep up a constant commercial intercourse with them. See Basnage—*Annal. Politico-Ecclesiast.* tom. ii. p. 207. Hen. Valesius, *Adnotat. ad Socratis Histor. Eccles.* p. 13. For my own part, I can fall in with neither of these opinions; for my belief is that those Indians, who requested to have a teacher sent them by Demetrius the bishop of Alexandria, were neither pagans nor strangers to Christianity, but Jews, who had settled in that part of Arabia, called by the Greeks and Romans Arabia Felix, and by the people of the east Hymen; and who had previously been brought to a knowledge of Christ and his word. My reason for thinking thus is, that Jerome says, Pantæus found amongst them the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, and brought it back to Alexandria with him, and that they had received this book from Bartholomew one of the twelve apostles, who had “preached amongst

C E N T.
II.Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

French writers, that their country, which anciently bore the name of Transalpine Gaul, was not blessed with the light of the gospel until this century, when a knowledge of the religion of Christ was first communicated to their rude forefathers by Pothinus, who, together with Irenæus, and certain other devout men, had travelled into Gaul from Asia. There are not wanting some, however, who would carry up the origin of the Gallic church to the apostles themselves or their immediate disciples [c]. From Gaul it seems proba-

amongst them the coming of Jesus Christ." *Catalog. Scriptor. Ecclesiast.* c. xxxvi. p. 107. It is apparent therefore that the people to whom Pantæus went, were not strangers to Christianity, as also that they were skilled in the Hebrew language, and were consequently of Jewish extraction. For since Bartholemew left with them one of the gospels written in Hebrew, it unavoidably follows, that they must have been acquainted with the Hebrew tongue. Had they been ignorant of the Hebrew, what end could it have answered to make them a present of a book in that language? It only remains then for me to shew that these same Jews were inhabitants of Arabia Felix. And in this I feel no sort of difficulty whatever, in as much as it can clearly be ascertained that this part of India was the scene of Bartholomew's labours. For let any one only be at the pains of comparing together the testimony of ancient authors, respecting that India, to which a knowledge of Christ and his word was first imparted by Bartholomew, and not the shadow of a doubt can remain with him, as to its having been Arabia Felix, which we well know was one of the countries included under the title of India by the ancients. See Tillemont, in *Vita Bartholomei. Mem. Hist. Ecclesiast.* tom. i. p. 1160, 1161.

[c] The most eminent of the French writers have at different times engaged in disputes of considerable warmth, respecting the antiquity and origin of the Gallic church. There appears to be three different opinions on the subject, each of which has found its advocates. (I.) That to which we have above given the precedence, has been defended with great ability and learning by the very celebrated Jo.

probable that Christianity passed into Cis-rhenane Germany, at that time under the dominion of the

C E N T.
II.

Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

Jo. Launois, in various tracts which are to be found in the first part of the second volume of the joint edition of his works. So cogent indeed are the arguments of this illustrious writer, that his opinion has been embraced by almost every one in France who makes pretension either to superior wisdom, ingenuity, or learning. Vid. *Histoire Litteraire de la France*, tom. i. p. 223, & seq. This opinion moreover is supported by the authority of no less than three most respectable ancient historians; of whom the first is Sulpitius Severus, who in speaking of the persecution which the Christians of Lyons and Vienne suffered, under the emperor Marcus Antoninus, (*Histor. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. 32. p. 246.) adds, *ac tum primum inter Gallias martyria visa, serius transfalpes Dei religione suscepta*. The next is the author of *The Acts of Saturninus*, bishop of Tholouse, who suffered martyrdom in the third century, under the reign of the emperor Decius, a work that is generally supposed to have been written in the beginning of the fourth century.—According to this writer, the churches that had been founded in France were but few and small even in the third century. Vid. Theod. Ruinart. *Acta Martyrum Sincera et Selecta*, p. 130. The third is Gregory of Tours, the parent of French history, who relates, (*Histor. Francor.* lib. i. cap. xxviii. p. 23, & *de Gloria Confessorum*, cap. xxx. p. 399. ed. Ruinart), that under the reign of Decius there were seven men sent from Rome into France for the purpose of preaching the gospel. These seven then, it is observable, are the very ones which popular tradition pronounces to have been the companions of the apostles Paul and Peter, and amongst them is that Dionysius the first bishop of Paris, whom the French formerly maintained to have been Dionysius the Areopagite. (II.) By those however who think it of greater importance to uphold ancient notions and magnify the consequence of France, than to ascertain the truth, an origin by far more august is assigned to the Gallic church, and the apostles Peter and Paul themselves are pronounced to have been its founders. According to them, the last mentioned of these apostles traversed a considerable part of Gaul in his way into Spain; and Luke and Crescens were afterwards dispatched by him on a mission to the Gauls; and the church of Paris owed its foundation to Dionysius the Areopagite, an immediate disciple of his, of whom mention

C E N T. the Romans, and was also transferred to the opposite shores of Britain, although it is insisted on by

II.

Origin of the Gallic, German, and English churches.

tion is made in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Peter likewise, they say, sent his disciple Trophimus into Gaul, and St. Philip laboured in the conversion of a part of it himself. And, as if all this were not enough, they will have it, that some of the most renowned prelates of the different Gallic churches, such as Paul of Narbonne, Martial of Limoges, and Saturnine of Thoulouse, had, before their coming into France, enjoyed the benefit of the apostles' society and instruction. See the epistle of the eminent Peter de Marc, *de Evangelii in Gallia Initiis*, which Valefius has prefixed to his edition of Eusebius. It must be confessed indeed, that the number of those who persist in maintaining the authenticity of all these particulars, is at present considerably reduced; for the fact is, that in support of a great part of them nothing better can be avouched than the testimony of obscure characters altogether unworthy of credit, or perhaps conjecture, or some vague tradition; in short, nothing but evidences of the most uncertain and unsatisfactory nature. (III.) There are however to be found in France, men by no means deficient in learning, who will defend the above way of thinking with some limitation, and who, although they are ready to give up such of the abovementioned facts as are unsupported by authority, will yet not hear of surrendering that grand citadel of ecclesiastical pre-eminence, the apostolic origin of the Gallic church. The arguments of Launois, Sirmond, and Tillemont, they will allow, place it beyond all dispute, that the celebrated Dionysius, the first bishop of Paris, concerning whose body such violent disputes have taken place between the Benedictine monks of St. Emmeran at Ratibon, and the French monks of St. Dionysius, was not the person whom the French, from the ninth century, have believed him to have been, *viz.* Dionysius the Arcopagite, one of St. Paul's disciples, but a very different man who flourished in the third century. They are also willing to admit that the vulgar tradition about the coming of Philip and other holy men into Gaul, is altogether undeserving of credit; and finally, that the greater part of the churches in that country which pretend to an apostolical foundation, were not in reality founded until long after the apostolic times. But the three following points they can on no account be brought to relinquish; first, that the great apostle of the Gentiles in his way into Spain tarried for

by not a few of the Germans, that their church owes its foundation to certain of the immediate

C E N T.
II.

COM-

Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

for some time in Gaul; secondly, that Luke and Crescens were dispatched by him on a mission to the Gauls; and lastly, that so early as the second century, there had been founded in Gaul many other Christian churches besides those of Lyons and Vienne. No one, that I know of, has displayed greater diligence and ability in support of this last way of thinking than Gabriel Liron a Benedictine monk of great erudition, in his *Dissertation sur l'Etablissement de la Religion Chretienne dans les Gaules*; which nearly fills the fourth volume of a work published by him, under the title of *Singularités Historiques & Litteraires*. Paris, 1740, 8vo. It has also been defended by Dion. Sammarthanus in the preface to his *Gallia Christiana*. For my own part I must say, that neither of these ways of thinking appears to me to be in all respects well-founded or unexceptionable. On the second, it cannot be necessary to make any remark, since it is supported by scarcely any one of the present day, except such as are interested in upholding the credit of a parcel of old stories, to which the churches are indebted for a great part of their riches. In support of the third, there appears to be many things yet un-established, that may with the strictest justice be called for. Admitting it for instance to be certain, what in point of fact we know to be most uncertain, that St. Paul made a journey into Spain, it yet by no means follows of necessity that he must have gone through Gaul in his way thither; for it is very possible that he might have made the journey by sea. For Luke's ever having been in Gaul we have no authority but that of Epiphanius, (in *Heres.* lib. i. § xi. p. 433.), a writer, to say no worse of him, of very indifferent credit, and by no means determinate in his way of speaking. For the word Gaul is here put by him absolutely, and we are consequently left utterly in the dark as to whether he means Transalpine or Cisalpine Gaul. Dionysius Petavius indeed (*Animadvers. ad Epiphanium*, p. 90.) suspects, and not without reason, that Cisalpine Gaul was the country meant. In proof of the mission of Crescens, the words of St. Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. are cited, in which the learned advocates for this legation contend, that instead of *Γαλατίαν*, as most copies have it, we ought to read with Epiphanius, *Γαλλίαν*. But even supposing that we were to yield to them in this, for our doing of which however nothing like a sufficient reason could readily

C E N T. companions and disciples of St. Peter and the
 II. other

Origin of
 the Gallic,
 German,
 and English
 churches.

readily be assigned, still here again the question would arise, as to whether it was Transalpine or Cisalpine Gaul that was meant. Possibly it may be true, although it cannot be absolutely proved to be so, that in the second century there were in Gaul, several churches besides those which we know to have been at that time established at Lyons and Vienne. But allowing this to be ever so certain, still it is not conclusive as to the main point in dispute, namely, whether or not the light of the gospel was first communicated to the people of Transalpine Gaul by the apostles themselves and their companions and disciples. To the opinion first above noticed, *viz.* that the Gauls were not acquainted with the name of Christ prior to the arrival of Pothinus and his companions from the east, although it has very illustrious patrons on its side, there yet seems wanting some further support. The celebrated passage which we have cited from Sulpitius Severus, and concerning which such great disputes have taken place amongst the learned, can certainly authorize no further inference than this, that the Christian religion was communicated at a later period to the Gauls than to the countries of Asia and the rest of Europe. So that it amounts not to any thing like a proof that the glad tidings of Christianity had never reached the Gauls until the arrival of Pothinus, Irenæus, and their companions, in the second century. From the acts of Saturninus it is clear, that the religion of Christ made but a slow progress in Gaul, and that under the reign of Decius, in the third century, there were only a few small churches scattered about here and there throughout the country, the major part of the inhabitants not having renounced idolatry even at that period. But this surely throws no obstacle whatever in the way of any one's believing that some of the apostles or their disciples had journied into Gaul, and that a part of that country had embraced Christianity prior to the second century. The passages referred to in Gregory of Tours, most assuredly possess considerable force when opposed to the idle notions formerly entertained by the French respecting Dionysius the Arcopagite, Trophimus, Martial, and others, as also in demonstrating the futility of the pretensions which many of the Gallic churches make to an apostolic foundation.—They also prove that the number of Christians in Gaul prior to the time of Decius was comparatively trifling; but all this is not shewing that those are in error who contend

other apostles (*d*); and the inhabitants of Britain would rather have us, with respect to the introduction

C E N T.
II.

Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

tend that the way of salvation was first made known to the Gauls by one of the apostles themselves, or by men who had enjoyed the benefit of the apostles' converse and instruction. Upon the whole, when I take into consideration the unbounded zeal displayed by our Lord's apostles in the propagation of his religion, I must own I find no little difficulty in persuading myself that a province of such extent and consequence, and no farther distant from Italy, could have been altogether neglected by them, and never invited to listen to the terms of salvation propounded by their divine master.—

Were I to be called upon then for a summary statement of my opinion on the subject I should say, peradventure Luke, peradventure Crescens, peradventure one even of the apostles themselves, might have taken a journey into Gaul with a view to the conversion of the natives. These primary efforts, by whomsoever made, were certainly attended with but very little success. In the second century Pothinus, with certain companions, arriving out of Asia, experienced a more propitious reception, and succeeded in establishing a small church at Lyons. This little assembly of Christians however, instead of increasing, went, in the course of time from various causes, much to decay, and the seven men, who according to Gregory of Tours, were sent from Rome into Gaul, under the reign of the emperor Decius, may be said to have found the Gallic church in a state little better than that of absolute ruin, and to have given to it as it were a second foundation. With this opinion the indefatigable Tillemont nearly coincides, in his *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. iv. p. 983.

[*d*] Both Irenæus and Tertullian, as we have above seen, § 1. note [*a*] make express mention of the German churches. From neither of these writers, however, is the least information to be obtained as to whether these churches were founded in this or the preceding century. or any thing collected that might lead us to form a judgment of their number and size. Even the part of Germany in which they were situated is not indicated. This silence has afforded to the German antiquaries a very ample field for dispute. The most learned and sagacious of them imagine, that the greater or Trans-rhenane Germany, which was very little known to the Romans, did not receive the light of the gospel in this century nor for many ages afterwards; and therefore

C E N T.
II.Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

roduction of Christianity into their country, receive the account of Bede, who represents Lucius,

therefore that the churches mentioned by Irenæus and Tertullian must have been situated in Cis-rhenane Germany, which was subject to the Roman government. Jo. Ernest. Grabe takes exception to this opinion, in his annotations on the passage in Irenæus under consideration; but as it appears to me on very light grounds.—For what he suggests is, that as Irenæus does not speak of Germany but of the Germanies, ἐν ταῖς Γερμανίαις, it is to be supposed that in his time there had been Christian churches established throughout the whole of Germany. But a man of his erudition ought surely to have recollected that Irenæus might without any impropriety speak thus of Cis-rhenane Germany, which, as is well known, had been divided by the Romans into the first and second, or Superior and Inferior Germany. Until therefore the opinion of the eminent men above alluded to, shall be opposed by arguments of greater force than this, its credit will remain unshaken. Other arguments indeed have been brought forward by Jo. Nichol. ab Hontheim, in his *Historia Trevirensis Diplomatica*, tom. i. *Dissert. de Æra Episcopatus Trevirensis*, p. 10, & seq., where he lays it down that the passage in Tertullian ought to be understood as relating to that part of Eastern Germany which borders on Sarmatia and Dacia; and the passage in Irenæus as relating to the whole of Germany. But these arguments, unless I am altogether deceived, carry no greater weight with them than that of Grabe does, and serve only to demonstrate the author's fertile and happy talent at conjecture. Marcus Hanfitzius is spoken of by him with approbation, as maintaining the same opinion in his *Germania Sacra*; but in this I think his memory must have deceived him, for I can find nothing of the kind said by Hanfitzius in the place referred to. A greater question is as to the antiquity and origin of the German churches. The principal churches of Germany, like those of other nations, would fain carry up their foundation to the times of the apostles, and even to the apostles themselves. Amongst other things there is an old tradition, that three of St. Peter's companions, namely, Eucharius, Valerius, and Maternus, were sent by him into Belgic Gaul, and so far seconded by divine favour that they succeeded in establishing churches at Cologne, Treves, Tongres, Leige, and other places, and continued in the superintendance and government of them until their

cius, an ancient king of that island, as having in this century procured some Christian teachers to

CENT.
II.

Origin of
the Gallic,
Germany,
and English
churches.

their deaths. Vid. Christoph. Brower. *Annales Trevirenses*, lib. ii. p. 143, & seq. *Acta Sanctor. Antwerpiens.* ad d. xxix. Januarii, p. 918. But in refutation of this, those great and impartial writers, Calmet in his *Dissertation sur les Eveques de Treves*, tom. i. *Histoire de Lorraine*, part iii. iv. Bolland in his *Acta Sanctorum*, Januarii, tom. ii. p. 922, & seq. Tillemont in his *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. iv. p. 1082; and finally, Hontheim in his *Dissertatio de Æra Episcopatus Trevirensis*, tom. i. *Hist. Trevirens.* have fully shewn, by arguments as conclusive as the nature of the question will admit of, that the above-mentioned sacred characters, with their associates, belong properly to the third, or rather to the beginning of the fourth century, and that the dignity of apostolic legates was gratuitously conferred upon them either through ignorance or vanity during the middle ages. To confess the truth, it appears to me extremely probable that the same persons by whom a knowledge of Christ and his gospel was in the second century communicated to the Gauls, extended the scene of their labours so far as to make the inhabitants of that part of Germany which is contiguous to Gaul, partakers of the same blessing. Gabriel Liron has, with much labour and ingenuity, endeavoured to prove the apostolical antiquity of the German churches, in his *Singularités Historiques & Littéraires*, tom. iv. p. 193, & seq. But the arguments and suggestions of this learned writer, although they may induce us to refuse joining with those who go the length of positively asserting, that no apostle or apostolic legate ever set foot in Germany, and that there were no Christians in that country prior to the time of Pothinus and Irenæus, yet by no means render it clear that such success attended the labours of any apostolic missionaries in Germany as for them to collect together and establish certain churches, the presidency over which they retained during their lives, and on their deaths transferred over to others. If any of the first promulgators of Christianity ever travelled into Germany, which in the absence of all positive testimony on the subject I will take upon me neither to affirm nor deny; it is certain that they accomplished nothing of any great moment amongst this warlike and uncultivated people, nor could any Christian churches have been established by them in that country upon any thing like a solid or permanent foundation.

C E N T. be sent him from Rome by the pontiff Eleutherus [e].

II.

Origin of
the Gallic,
German,
and English
churches.

IV. It

[e] Previously to the reformation, Joseph of Arimathea, the Jewish senator, by whom in conjunction with Nicodemus our blessed Saviour's obsequies were performed, was commonly considered as having been the parent of the British church. The tale propagated by the monks, in support of which however they could advance no sort of authority whatever, was that this illustrious character and twelve other persons were dispatched by St. Philip, who had taken upon himself the instruction of the Franks, into Britain, for the purpose of diffusing a knowledge of Christianity amongst the inhabitants of that island also, and that their mission was not unattended with success; for that within a short period they were so fortunate as to make a great number of converts, and to lay the foundation of the church of Glastonbury. Vid. Rapin de Thoyras, *Histoire d'Angleterre*, tom. i. p. 84. At present the better informed of the British do not hesitate to give up this narrative of the origin of their church as altogether a fiction; but they do not fail, at the same time, to supply its place by an account equally, nay even more august and magnificent, lest they should appear to come behind the other European churches in point of antiquity and consequence. What they assert is, that the Britons are expressly enumerated both by Eusebius and Theodoret amongst those of the Gentiles, whom these writers state to have enjoyed the benefit of receiving the faith from the mouths of the apostles themselves, and that therefore some one or other of the apostles must have travelled into Britain and resided there for some time. But since it is not a little difficult to fix on either of the apostles that were the companions of our blessed Lord, who could with the least show of probability be named as the one that took this journey into Britain, they have recourse to St. Paul, maintaining that the inhabitants of this island acquired their first knowledge of the gospel through the preaching of this great apostle of the Gentiles, who had sailed into Britain from Spain. And this conjecture or opinion they conceive to be supported by (amongst other ancient authors) Clement of Rome, who says that St. Paul travelled, ἐπὶ τὸ τέγμα τῆς δύσεως, "to the very confines of the west." To this they add, that amongst so many thousands of the Romans as passed into Britain, both during the time of Claudius and afterwards, there must no doubt have been many who professed the Christian faith.

The

IV. It is scarcely, indeed we might say, it is not at all possible to ascertain, with any thing like precision,

C E N T.
II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

The church that was thus first established in Britain, however, they allow to have been but small, and after a little while to have wholly fallen to ruin, or at least gone in great measure to decay. They therefore consider the British church as having received, what may be termed, its principal and permanent foundation, in the second century, under the reign of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, and in the time of the Roman pontiff Eleutherus. Their opinion as to this is grounded on what is recorded by Bede in his Ecclesiastical History and by others after him, as a fact not in the least to be doubted of, namely, that certain persons were, at that period, dispatched to Rome by Lucius the king of Britain, requesting that some Christian teachers might be sent him; that in consequence of this application several such teachers were sent, and that by the zeal and unremitting exertions of these missionaries, the whole island was gradually converted to the Christian faith. The reader will find these different points discussed with much ingenuity, and supported with great ability and learning, by those eminent native writers: J. Usher in his *Antiquitates Ecclesiae Britannicae*, cap. i. p. 7. F. Godwin in his work *de Conversione Britanniae*, cap. i. p. 7. Edward Stillingfleet in his *Antiquities of the British Church*, cap. i. and William Burton in his *Animadvers. in Epist. Clement. Rom. ad Corinthios. Patrum Apostolic.* tom. ii. p. 470.: With whom we find not a few foreigners agreeing in opinion. Vid. F. Spanheim, *Hist. Eccles. Maj.* sæc. ii. p. 603, 604. tom. i. opp. Rapin de Thoyras, *Histoire d'Angleterre*, tom. i. p. 86, & seq. With the reader's leave I will now give my own opinion on this subject, propounding in the way of conjecture such suggestions as appear to me to have probability on their side, but adopting nothing which is not supported by the decisive testimony either of facts or of words. In the first place then, as to the question of, whether or not either of the apostles themselves, or any one commissioned by them, ever took a journey into Britain with a view to the conversion of the natives; I believe it must be passed over as not to be determined, although I must confess, that probability seems to lean rather in favour of those who take the affirmative side, than of those who oppose it. St. Paul's voyage into Britain is most intimately connected with his journey into Spain; but with

C E N T.
II.Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

precision, the proportion which the number of the Christians in this age, and more especially within

what doubts and almost insurmountable difficulties, the fact of this apostle ever having been in Spain is encumbered, is well known to every one at all conversant in these matters. The story of Joseph of Arimathea being sent from Gaul into Britain by Philip, seems to have somewhat in it of truth, although corrupted and deformed through the ignorance, or arrogance, or, perhaps, the knavery of the monks. In fact, it should seem more than probable as to this, that what took place in Gaul and Germany, happened likewise in Britain, namely, that certain devout characters, of an age by far more recent than that of the apostles, were, through one or other of the above-mentioned causes converted into apostolic missionaries. The truth of the matter I suspect to be, that the monks had collected from remote tradition and ancient documents, that some man of the name of Joseph had passed over from Gaul into Britain, and applied himself with success to the propagation of the Gospel there; and either from their ignorance of any other eminent christian character of the name of Joseph, besides him of whom mention is made in the history of Christ, or from a determination to exalt the dignity of the British church even at the expence of truth, took upon them to assert, that this Joseph was none other than that illustrious Jewish senator, by whom the body of our Lord was interred, and that he was sent from Gaul into Britain by the apostle Philip. In like manner as the French converted Dionysius, a bishop of Paris, who flourished in the third century, into Dionysius the Areopagite, and the Germans metamorphosed Maternus, Eucharius, and Valerius, who lived in the third and fourth centuries, into primitive teachers and disciples of St. Peter, so I doubt not the British monks also, out of zeal for the honour of their church, were induced to lend a helping hand to some Joseph, who had in the second century crossed over to their ancestors from Gaul, and to lift him up one century higher. Being in the present day unfurnished with any positive evidence on the subject, we can only offer this in the way of surmise. A considerable degree of obscurity hangs over the history of those persons, who, in the second century accompanied Pothinus out of Asia into Gaul; possibly amongst those devout characters there might be likewise a Philip, who persuaded Joseph to undertake the journey

within the confines of the Roman empire, bore to that of those who still persisted in adhering

C E N T.
II.

TO
Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

journey into Britain; and whom the same monks, by way of giving a due consistency to the different parts of their tale, might raise to the dignity of an apostle. In the present day, as we before observed, these things can only be guessed at; but our surmises are not mere random ones. For not to rest upon the circumstances that the clergy of almost all the different nations of Europe have fallen into a similar error, or been guilty of the same kind of deceit, and that it would therefore be very extraordinary if those of Britain alone, should not have blundered, or transgressed in this respect; the account of the matter, as it has reached us, carries with it some not very obscure marks of truth. That these monks, for instance, should not have pitched upon one of the apostles; but have contented themselves with one of our Lord's friends; that of such friends, Joseph should have been the one fixed on; that this their Joseph should not have travelled into Britain, by the express command of Christ himself, or have been conveyed thither in some miraculous manner; but that on the contrary, they should allow him to have crossed over to them from Gaul, which is, in fact, admitting that Christianity had obtained for itself a footing amongst the Gauls, prior to its introduction into Britain; all these circumstances, in my opinion, seem plainly to indicate that they come not properly within the class of those who invent what is absolutely false, but were men who perverted the authentic traditions of their ancestors, so as to render them subservient to certain purposes of their own. My opinion is much the same with regard to Lucius, whom the more respectable of the British writers strenuously maintain to have been, not the original founder, but as it were, the second parent and amplifier of their church. That a Lucius of this description did actually exist, I have not the least doubt; but I do not believe him to have been either a Briton or a king of the Britons. The very name, which is Roman, speaks him to have been some man of eminence amongst the Romans, who were at that time masters of the island. This man probably, being well-disposed toward the Christian religion, or having, perhaps, already fully embraced it himself, beheld with grief the superstition of the Britons, and with a view to its abolition called in some Christian teachers from abroad. These his laudable inten-

C E N T. to the heathen superstitions. Most of those, by
 II. whom the subject has been adverted to in modern
 times,

Number of
 the Christi-
 ans in this
 age.

tions, we may well suppose to have been seconded by Divine Providence. I cannot, however; persuade myself to believe that he had resort to Rome for those teachers, and that they were sent over to him by Eleutherus, although this is the account which Bede gives us of the matter. Lucius had no need to send to such a distance for men qualified to instruct the Britons in the principles of Christianity, since in the time of Eleutherus, there were resident in the neighbouring country of Gaul, particularly at Lyons and Vienne, Christians sufficiently skilled to assume the office of teachers, and burning with an holy zeal to embark in the further propagation of their faith. That Lucius should have sent to Rome for teachers, was, I suspect, altogether an invention of the monks of the seventh century, who perceiving that the Britons were but little disposed to receive the laws and institutions of the Roman see, used every endeavour to persuade them that the British church owed its foundation to the Roman pontiffs, and that it was by the assistance of Eleutherus that Lucius, the first Christian king of Britain, brought about the conversion of his people. The information, however, which we are in possession of respecting those of the ancient Britons, who had embraced Christianity prior to the arrival of Augustin, who was sent into Britain by Gregory the Great in the sixth century, will not permit us to believe this. Had their ancestors been instructed in the principles of Christianity by teachers from Rome, most unquestionably they would have adopted the Roman mode of worship, and have entertained a veneration for the majesty, or to speak more properly, the authority of the bishop of Rome. But from the testimony of Bede, and various ancient documents that are to be found in Wilkins's *Councils of Great Britain and Ireland*, tom. i. p. 36., it is plain that they knew of no such character as the bishop of Rome; and could not, without great difficulty, be brought to yield obedience to his mandates. In their time of celebrating Easter too, to pass over others of their observances, it appears that they were guided, not by the Roman, but the Asiatic rule; and what is particularly deserving of notice, they, like the Asiatics in the second century maintained, that the rule to which they conformed was derived from St. John. See *Bede's Historia Eccles. Gentis Anglorum*.
 lib. iii.

times, have erred by running into one or other of the extremes. The number of the Christians

C E N T.

II.

at
Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

lib. iii. c. xxv. p. 173. edit. Chiffletian. By no sort of circumstantial evidence whatever, could it, in my opinion, be more clearly proved than by the above, that it was not from any missionaries of Eleutherus, but from certain devout persons, who had originally come from the east, namely from Asia, that the ancient Britons received their instructions in the Christian discipline. Whoever will be at the pains to connect all these things together, and to consider them with a due degree of attention, may, I rather think, not feel altogether indisposed to adopt the opinion which I myself have been led to entertain respecting the origin of the British church. It is this:—if any Christian church was ever formed in Britain, either by one of the apostles themselves, or any of their disciples, which I certainly will not take upon me to deny, it could not have been a large one, and must have very soon gone to decay. Christianity, however, again recovered for itself a footing in Britain, under the reign of the emperor Marcus Antoninus in the second century, when Eleutherus was bishop of Rome, and the Christians of Lyons and Vienne in Gaul were suffering under a most dreadful persecution from the slaves of idolatry. There happened at that time to be resident in Britain, a certain wealthy and powerful Roman of the name of Lucius, who had been led to entertain a respect for Christianity, and was desirous of having its principles disseminated, both amongst the native inhabitants of Britain and the Romans who were resident there. Hearing that certain devout men, who had come from Asia into Gaul, had met with considerable success in the propagation of the Gospel in this latter country, and supported with wonderful fortitude the varied train of evils to which they were exposed; he, by his authority, procured some of them to come over into Britain, and make known the true way of salvation also there. In all probability the name of the leader, or principal one of the sacred characters that thus passed over from Gaul into Britain was Joseph, and that of his superior, by whose command or instigation the journey was undertaken, Philip; and hence arose the tale of Joseph of Arimathea been sent from Gaul into Britain, by the apostle Philip. At the time when this happened Eleutherus was bishop of Rome, and occasion was hence taken

C E N T.

II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

at this period is as unquestionably over-rated by those, who, not making due allowance for the tumid eloquence of some of the ancient fathers, represent it, as having exceeded, or at least equalled that of the heathen worshippers [f], as it is under-rated by those who contend that in this age, there were no where to be met with, no not even in the largest and most populous cities, any Christian assemblies of importance, either in point of magnitude or

by the Romish monks, who found their interests not a little concerned in making the Britons regard the Romish church in the light of a spiritual mother, to pretend that the teachers above alluded to had been sent over from Rome by the pontiff Eleutherus. Should any one however, feel inclined rather to believe that some of the teachers from Asia to whom the Gauls stood so much indebted for instruction, were induced, either voluntarily, or from motives of personal safety during the persecution that raged at Lyons to cross over into Britain, and that their labours in this island were crowned with the conversion of a multitude of people, the first and principal of whom was an eminent person of the name of Lucius, I shall not object to his adopting this opinion in preference to the one above suggested.

[f] Tertullian is by many considered as speaking literally no more than the truth, when he urges the Romans in the following words: *Hesterni sumus, et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa, tribus, decurias, palatium, senatum, forum. Sola vobis relinquimus templa. Apologet. cap. xxxvii. p. 311. edit. Havercamp.* To me, however, it appears that the African orator, who seems to have been naturally inclined to exaggeration, in this instance, most evidently rhetoricates in a very high degree. Were the passage to be stripped of its insidious and fallacious colouring, I conceive it would be found to mean simply this:—the Christians are very numerous throughout the whole of the Roman empire, indeed it is scarcely possible to name any department in which some of them are not to be found.

respecta-

respectability [g]. That both are equally in an error, is manifest from the persecutions that were carried

C E N T.
II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

[g] The world has of late seen many writers of the most opposite characters and views assiduously co-operate in undervaluing and diminishing the churches of the second century. Those inveterate enemies of the Christian religion, whom we style Deists, do this by way of meeting the argument which its defenders draw from the wonderful and inconceivably rapid propagation of the gospel; an argument which, they conceive, must completely fall to the ground could the world be once brought to believe, that during the first two centuries, the converts to Christianity were but few, and those, chiefly, of a servile or low condition. The adversaries of episcopacy, whom we commonly term Presbyterians, take the same side, with equal zeal, under the hope of proving that the charge committed to a bishop of the second century must have been comprised within a very narrow compass, and consequently that the prelates of the present day, whose superintendance, for the most part, extends over large tracts of country, are altogether a different order of men from the primitive bishops. The pastor of a congregation of about two hundred, or at the most of six hundred persons of little or no account (and a bishop of the second century, according to them, was nothing more,) may rather be likened, say they, to a country parish priest than to a bishop of modern days. The same thing is likewise eagerly contended for by such of our own writers as have entered the lists with the advocates for the church of Rome. The object which these propose to themselves in so doing is to render it evident that the vast multitude of martyrs and confessors with which the Roman calendar is crowded, must be, for the most part, fictitious; and that the bones, which are daily brought to light from the Roman catacombs, are rather to be considered as the remains of slaves and people of the lowest order, than as reliques of christian martyrs. In this way do we frequently find persons of the most opposite views concur in yielding to each other a mutual support. Wise and honest men, who take care always to temper their zeal in the cause of religion by a proper respect for truth, will readily allow that we have sufficient grounds to warrant us in making no very inconsiderable deduction from that immense host of Christians which many conceive to have existed in the second century; but on the other

CENT.
II.Number of
the Christians
in this
age.

carried on with such fury against the Christians in this century. Had their number been any thing

hand, they find themselves precluded by the most unexceptionable testimony of words as well as facts (and this too deduced, not from the writings of the Christians themselves, but of men who were hostile to the christian name,) from joining in opinion with those who maintain that in this age the christian churches were but few and inconsiderable throughout the Roman empire. To say nothing of the evidence of facts, there is the notable testimony of an author of the greatest weight, namely, Pliny the proprætor of Bithynia, who, in a report made by him to the emperor soon after the commencement of this century, states the province over which he presided to be so filled with Christians, that the worship of the heathen deities had nearly fallen into disuse. *Epistol. lib. x. ep. xcviij. p. 821. edit. Longol. Multi, says he, omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusque sexus etiam, vocantur in periculum et vocabuntur.* In this passage I would particularly recommend the words *omnis ordinis* to the attention of those who would willingly have us believe that the primitive churches were made up of rude and illiterate persons, slaves, old women of the lowest order, in fact of the very dregs of the people, and that amongst the christian converts there were none to be found of any account or dignity. Either their position must be wrong, or Pliny must have here stated an absolute falsehood. *Neque civitates tantum, he continues, sed vicus etiam atque agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est.*—The whole of the province therefore swarmed with Christians, not merely a particular part of it. Lastly, it is plainly to be perceived from his account, that the credit of the Heathen deities had at one time been in great jeopardy, and that the number of their worshippers was exceeded by that of the Christians. This is manifest from what he states of the temples having been deserted, the sacred solemnities for a long time intermitted, and the sacrifices offered to the gods reduced to a mere nothing. *Certe satis constat, prope jam desolata templa cæpisse celebrari, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti, passimque venire victimos, quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur.* We are reduced to the necessity then of either believing that the report made by this circumspèct and prudent writer to his imperial master was founded in fiction, or else, admitting that in the Pontic province, even so early as his time, the Heathen

thing equal to what many would have us believe, common prudence would have withheld the emperors,

C E N T.
II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

Heathen worshippers were far outnumbered by the Christians; at least, that the greatest part of its inhabitants had manifested a disposition to abandon the religion of their ancestors. Those who conceive that the Roman empire contained within it but few Christians at this period, think to do away the force of this testimony by saying, that in this letter to Trajan, Pliny assumes more the character of an advocate than that of an historian, and that therefore what he says is not to be understood altogether in a literal sense. Now to this I will in candour accede so far as to admit that Pliny was desirous of inspiring the emperor with sentiments of lenity and pity towards a set of people whom he knew to be of an harmless character, and under the influence of no evil principle, and that with this view he was led in some measure to amplify the number of the Christians; but hither surely cannot be referred what he says of the temples having been before nearly deserted, the sacred rites intermitted, and the sacrifices neglected. For Trajan could have drawn no other conclusion from this than that Christianity was on the decline. In every other respect too, we find the orator quite laid aside, and things represented in plain and simple terms without the least artificial colouring. The testimony of Pliny is confirmed by Lucian, to whom it is impossible to impute any thing like a similarity of design. Lucian, in an account which he has transmitted to posterity of the life and nefarious practices of Alexander, represents this infamous impostor as complaining "Αθεῶν ἐμπεπλησθαι καὶ χριστιανῶν τὸν Πόντον, οἱ περὶ αὐτῆ τολμῶσι τὰ κάκιστα βλασφημεῖν: *plenam esse Pontum Atheis et Christianis, qui audeant pessima de se maledicta spargere.* In *Pseudomant.* § 25. p. 232. tom. ii. opp. edit. Gesner. This Alexander appears to have dreaded the perspicacity of the Christians, by whom he was surrounded, in no less a degree than that of the Epicureans, a set of men by no means of an insignificant or frivolous character, but on the contrary intelligent and shrewd. By a particular injunction therefore, he prohibited both the one and the other from being admitted to the secret mysterious rites which he instituted. "Εἰ τις Ἀθεός, ἢ χριστιανός, ἢ Ἐπικύρειος, ἢ κει κατάσκοπος τῶν ὀργίων, φεύγετω. l. c. § 38. p. 244. These words the illustrious translator of Lucian renders, *si quis Atheus, aut Christianus, aut Epicureus venerit, orgiorum speculator, fugito.*
To

C E N T.
II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

perors, magistrates, and priests, from irritating them either by proscriptions, or punishments, or rigorous severities of any kind. But on the other hand, had they been merely a trifling set of obscure ignoble persons, they would, instead of being combated with so much eagerness and pertinacity, have been spurned at and treated with derision. Upon the whole, the conclusion

* To me, however, it appears that we should better meet the sense of the original by rendering them *si quis Atheus, sive Christianus sit, sive Epicureus, venerit, fugito*. The title of Atheists being, as it strikes me, here used by this impostor generically to denote those to whom he afterwards specifically takes exception under the two denominations of Christians and Epicureans. That the Christians as well as the Epicureans, were termed Atheists by their adversaries is well known to every one. It redounds however, not a little to the credit of the Christians of Pontus that we find Alexander thus classing them with the Epicureans, a set of men on whom it was not easy to impose either with respect to their eyes or their ears. In the present day we have many who would willingly persuade us that the primitive Christians were of such an insignificant and stupid a character as not to be capable of distinguishing miracles and prodigies from the tricks of impostors, or from some of the regular though rare operations of nature. To this Alexander, however, this cunning deceiver, who had found means to impose on so many who were deficient neither in perception nor understanding, they appeared to be persons of a very different cast; men, in fact, endowed with a considerable share of caution and prudence, who were well capable of forming a proper estimate of miracles and prodigies, and whom all the craft and cunning of those who made it their study by tricks and deception to impose on the vulgar, could not easily delude. The fear thus manifested by Alexander of the Christians, must certainly be allowed to possess considerable weight in proving how very numerous they were in the provinces of the Roman empire; nor is it open to the same exceptions that are taken to the testimony of Pliny. Alexander cannot be charged with indulging in declamation by way of moving the passions; his complaint is dictated merely by a concern for himself and his credit with the world.

that

that seems least liable to exception is, that the number of the Christians was in this age very considerable in such of the provinces as had been early brought to a knowledge of the truth, and continued still to cultivate and cherish it; but that nothing beyond a few small and inconsiderable assemblies of them was to be found in those districts where the light of the gospel had been but recently made known, or if communicated at an early period, had been suffered to languish and fall into neglect.

V. The astonishing progress thus made by Christianity, and the uninterrupted series of victories which it obtained over the ancient superstitions, are attributed by the writers of those days, not so much to the zeal and diligence of those who, either in conformity to what they considered as a divine call, of their own accord assumed the office of teachers, or had else been regularly appointed thereto by the bishops, as to the irresistible operation of the Deity acting through them. For, according to these authors, so energetic and powerful was the operation of divine truth, that most frequently, upon its being simply propounded, without entering into either proofs or arguments, its effects on the hearers' minds were such, that persons of every age, sex, and condition, became at once enamoured of its excellence, and eagerly rushed forward to embrace it. The astonishing fortitude and constancy likewise, they report, with which many of the Christians sustained themselves, under torments of the most excruciating nature, even to the very death, inspired great multitudes of those who were spectators of their sufferings with an invincible determination to enrol themselves under the banners of a religion capable of inspiring its followers with such

C E N T.
II.

Number of
the Christi-
ans in this
age.

Causes to
which the
rapid propa-
gation of
Christianity
is to be
attributed.

C E N T.
II.

Causes to which the rapid propagation of Christianity is to be attributed.

such magnanimity of soul and such a thorough contempt for every thing temporal, whether it were good or evil [*b*]. Finally, they represent the Deity as having bestowed on not a few of his ministers and chosen servants, such a measure of his all-powerful Spirit, that they could expel dæmons from the bodies of those that were possessed, cure diseases with a word, recal the dead to life, and do a variety of other things far beyond the reach of human power to accomplish [*i*]. Most certain it is that the generality
of

[*b*] Tertullian, at nearly the end of his Apology, observes, with much elegance and ingenuity, *Nec quicquam tamen proficit exquisitor quæque crudelitas vestra, illecebra est magis seclæ. Plures efficitur, quoties metimur a vobis: Semen est sanguis Christianorum.* It is remarked also by Justin Martyr (in *Dialog. cum Tryphone*, p. 322. edit. Jebbian.) Ὅσα περιεῖν ἂν τοιαῦτα τίνα γένηται, τοσῶτο μᾶλλον ἄλλοι πλείονες πιστοὶ καὶ θεοσεβεῖς διὰ τῆ ὀνόματος τῆ Ἰησοῦ γίνονται. *Quanto magis ejusmodi quædam in nos expediuntur tormenta, tanto alii plures fideles & veræ religionis cultores per nomen Jesu fiunt.* This he illustrates by a simile by no means inelegant: Ὅποιον ἰάν ἀμπέλω τις ἐκτέμῃ τὰ καρποφορήσαντα μέρη, εἰς τὸ ἀναβλαῆσαι ἑτέρας κλάδους καὶ ἑυδαλεῖς καὶ καρποφόρους ἀναδιδῶσι· τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἐφ' ἡμῶν γίνεται. *Quemadmodum enim si quis vitis excidat fructificantes partes ut palmites quidem alios floridos & frugiferos proferat, facit: Ita in nobis quoque accidit. Plantata namque a Deo et Christo servatore vitis est ejus populus.*

[*i*] That this was the case, and that those gifts of the Holy Spirit which are commonly termed miraculous, were liberally imparted by Heaven to numbers of the Christians, not only in this but likewise in the succeeding age, and more especially to those of them who devoted themselves to the propagation of the gospel amongst the Heathen, has, on the faith of the concurrent testimony of the ancient fathers, been hitherto universally credited throughout the Christian world. Nor does it appear to me, that in our belief as to this we can with the least propriety be said to have embraced any thing contrary to sound reason. Only let it be considered that the writers on whose testimony we rely, were all of them men of gravity and worth, who could feel no
inclination

of those who in this century devoted themselves to the propagation and defence of Christianity, C E N T.
II.

were } Causes to which the rapid propagation of Christianity is to be attributed.

inclination to deceive, that they were in part philosophers, that in point of residence and country they were far separated from each other, that their report is not grounded upon mere hearsay, but upon what they state themselves to have witnessed with their own eyes, that they call upon God himself in the most solemn manner to attest its truth, (Vid. Origen *contra Celsum*, lib. i. p. 35. edit. Spencer;) and lastly, that they do not pretend to have themselves possessed the power of working miracles, but merely attribute it to others; and let me ask what reason can there possibly be assigned, that should induce us to withhold from them our implicit credit? Some years since, however, the opposite side of the question was boldly taken up by an English author, who on other occasions had shewn himself to be possessed of an excellent genius and no ordinary degree of learning; I mean Dr. Conyers Middleton, who, in a volume of some size, which he sent out under the title of "*A free Inquiry into the miraculous Powers, &c.*" London, 1749, has, without ceremony, upbraided the whole Christian world with suffering themselves to be grossly imposed upon in this respect, and taken upon him to assert, that every thing which has been handed down to us by so many of the fathers respecting the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and the miracles of the first ages, is devoid of foundation, and utterly unworthy of credit. Those who may be desirous of learning the history of this celebrated book, and of the very acrimonious controversy to which it gave rise in Great Britain, may consult the English, French, and German literary journals, as also the confutation of the work itself, which was lately published in Germany. In this place I shall attempt nothing more than by a few observations to contribute somewhat towards the illustration of this matter, which has not even yet ceased to agitate the learned world, and must certainly be considered, on many accounts, as of the very highest moment. The state of the case appears to be this. The very learned author of the Inquiry most fully admits that the apostolic age abounded in miracles and extraordinary gifts, but denies that any thing of this nature was witnessed by the world subsequently to the decease of our Lord's apostles, and hence infers, that the accounts which have reached us of the miracles wrought in the second and third centuries, are to be regarded either as the inventions of

C E N T.
II.

Causes to
which the
rapid propa-
gation of
Christianity
is to be
attributed.

were not possessed either of sufficient knowledge, eloquence, or authority, to be capable of effecting

of knaves, or the dreams of fools. It appears to him, moreover, that an urgent necessity exists for our coming to this conclusion, inasmuch as the principles and arguments on which the miracles of the first ages rest for support, will serve equally well to uphold the credit of the wonders pretended to have been wrought in more recent times by the saints of the Romish church: and it is consequently impossible for us effectually to assail the latter until we can so far break through our prejudices as to give up our defence of a belief in the former. Now in all this there may perhaps be nothing to which exception can justly be taken, or that should seem to be unworthy of a man of sound sense and a Christian.—For the divine origin of the Christian religion depends not at all for support on the miracles which are recorded to have been wrought in the second and third centuries. Only let it be granted that a power of altering the laws of nature was resident in Christ and his apostles, and the point is placed beyond the reach of cavil. But to any one who shall peruse Dr. Middleton's book with attention, it cannot fail to be apparent that, although his attack is ostensibly directed solely against the miracles of more recent times, yet his object was collaterally to impeach the credit of those wrought by our Lord and his apostles, and insidiously to undermine our belief of every thing to the accomplishment of which the ordinary powers of nature could not have been equal. For the arguments and mode of reasoning which he opposes to the miracles of the second and third centuries, are of such a nature as to admit of their being most readily brought to bear with equal effect on those of the first century, so that if the former fall before them, every hope must vanish of our being any longer able to support the latter. Upon perceiving, as they readily did, that such was the scheme of this ingenious but artful writer, it could not otherwise happen but that the very learned and venerable body whose province it is to watch over the interests of religion in England, should at once take the alarm, and not only make use of every effort to render the plan abortive, but also without reserve accuse its author of bad faith, and attribute to him the worst intentions. The certainty and truth of what I have here stated is sufficiently proved by the learned Doctor's very mode of argumentation, which is of such a nature that if it were to prevail would greatly endanger the authority
of

ing any thing great or remarkable without preternatural assistance. For although as the age ad-

C E N T.
II.

Causes to which the rapid propagation of Christianity is to be attributed.

of those miracles on which the truth of the Christian religion principally rests for support. The scheme which the Doctor labours by great length of argument and an abundant display of erudition to establish is briefly this.—All the Christian writers of the first three centuries whose works have come down to us, were men possessed of no judgment or discrimination, neither were they always sufficiently cautious and circumspect, but occasionally betrayed a very great proneness to superstition and credulity. Whatever therefore they may have transmitted to us respecting the miracles wrought in their days, including even those of which they state themselves to have been eye-witnesses, is to be considered in the light of mere nonsense and fable. As if it were certain that none but men of nice discrimination were capable of distinguishing between a true miracle and a pretended one, and that those must of necessity have always been imposed upon who on some occasions appear to have yielded their credit on too easy terms. We could have endured it had this eminent scholar contented himself with asserting that several of those things which are reported to have happened in the first ages, contrary to the established order of nature, might very well be doubted of; but to attempt, by a general argument like the above, open as it is to infinite exceptions, and totally destitute of any evident or necessary connection, to overthrow the united testimonies of so many authors of unquestionable piety, and who, it is plain, were in many things sufficiently cautious and circumspect, indicates, in my opinion, a mind replete with temerity, and disposed to strew the paths of religion with insidious difficulties and snares. Happily this illustrious writer himself appears some short time before his death, which happened in the year 1750, to have been fully convinced, by the arguments of his opponents, of the weakness of his opinion. For in his last reply, a posthumous work that came out in 1751, under the title of a “Vindication of the free Inquiry into the miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church,” &c. I say in this his last literary effort, although he expresses himself in language more contentious and virulent than the occasion could possibly demand, he yet plainly acknowledges himself to be vanquished, and yields up the palm to his adversaries. For he therein disclaims ever having meant to contend that no miracles

C E N T.
II.

Causes to which the rapid propagation of Christianity is to be attributed.

advanced, the study of philosophy and letters gained ground amongst the Christians in general, and more particularly in Egypt, and the truths of the Gospel were embraced by some even of those who were distinguished by the title of philosophers, yet there was every where a considerable scarcity of learned and eloquent men; and by far the greater part of the bishops and elders of the churches, took to themselves credit rather than shame, for their utter ignorance of all human arts and discipline.

miracles whatever were wrought in the primitive Christian church subsequently to the death of the apostles, and professes himself ready to admit, that when occasion required, God was ever ready to support the Christian cause by marks of his omnipotent power. All that he ever intended to maintain, he says, was this, that a constant and perpetual power of working miracles was never resident in the church posterior to the age of the apostles, and that therefore no credit could be due to those of the early defenders of Christianity who had arrogated to themselves such a perpetual power: in short, if I rightly comprehend the meaning of the learned author, he wished to explain himself as having never intended to assert any thing more than that amongst the teachers of the second and third centuries there were none that possessed the power of working miracles at pleasure. But this is altogether changing the state, as they term it, of the controversy. Had the learned Doctor, when he entered on his undertaking, had nothing more in view than the establishment of this point, he might have spared himself all the pains that he took, in the first place, to write, and afterwards to defend his book. For I do not know that it ever entered into the mind of any one professing Christianity, to assert, that in the second, third, or fourth centuries there were to be found amongst the Christians men to whom the Almighty had conceded the power of working miracles at all times and in all places, and of such a nature and as often as they might think proper. *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos.*

VI. But

VI. But we should do wrong to understand what is thus recorded respecting the wonderful means by which the Deity himself contributed towards the propagation of the Gospel, in such a way as to conceive that the cause of Christianity was not at all indebted for its success to human counsels, labour, or studies. For without doubt the progress of divine truth was, in no little degree, forwarded by the very wise and laudable exertions of the bishops and other pious characters in getting the writings of the apostles, which had been collected into one volume, translated into the most popular languages, and distributed amongst the multitude: indeed, the bare reading of these works is stated to have so affected many, as to cause them instantly to embrace the Christian faith [k]. The cause of Christianity derived also

C E N T.
II.

Human
causes which
contributed
to forward
the propa-
gation of
Christianity.

[k] Whether any one or more of the ancient translations of the sacred volume that have reached our days, can justly be ranked amongst the literary productions of this early period, admits of considerable doubt. It appears, however, from very respectable authorities, that in the second century for certain, if not in the first, the books of the New Testament had been translated into different popular languages. See Basnage *Histoire de l'Eglise*, liv. ix. cap. i. p. 450. tom. i. How anxiously desirous, moreover, the Christians of this age were to inform the minds of the multitude, and to lead them to Christ, by furnishing them with translations of those writings in which the scheme of salvation through Him is laid open, and with what industry this object was pursued by men of every description, cannot be better understood than from the great number of Latin translators of the sacred volume, which, according to Augustine, stepped forward even in the very infancy as it were of Christianity. For as the Latin language had been rendered familiar to a great part of the world, and was not entirely unknown even to what were termed the barbarous nations, the Christians conceived that by their translating the books of the New Testament into this tongue, the way of truth would at once be laid open to an innumerable portion of mankind.

C E N T.

II.

Human
causes which
contributed
to forward
the propa-
gation of
Christianity.

also no inconsiderable benefit from the different Apologies, in Greek as well as Latin, by which those

Eager therefore to accomplish so desirable an end, they were in some instances led to form too favourable an estimate of their powers, and the task was occasionally undertaken by those who were by no means competent to its execution.—*Qui scripturas ex Hebræa lingua in Græcam verterunt*, says Augustine (*de Doctrin. Christian.* lib. ii. cap. xi. p. 19. tom. iii.) *numerari possunt, Latini autem interpretes nullo modo. Ut enim cuique primis fidei temporibus in manus venit codex Græcus aliquantulum facultatis sibi utriusque linguæ habere videbatur, ausus est interpretari.* In this passage it is manifest, although there are some who either cannot or will not perceive it, that by *Codex Græcus* is not meant any kind of book written in the Greek language, but the *Codex Bibliorum*, or those writings which the Christians held sacred. For Augustine is not speaking of translations from the Greek in general, but of versions of the Holy Scriptures. Without doubt the account he here gives is to be considered as somewhat hyperbolical: for who can bring himself readily to believe that in the infancy of Christianity the multitude of Latin translators of the sacred volume was so great as not to admit of being numbered? I conceive him therefore to have meant merely that a considerable number of the early Christians had taken upon them the office of translating the Holy Scriptures into the Latin tongue, which was at that time one of the most popular languages. A sufficient testimony surely even this of their piety and holy zeal. Of these various Latin translations Augustine pronounces a decided preference to be due to one which he names *the Italic*. *In ipsis autem interpretationibus, Itala ceteris præferatur: nam est verborum tenacior, cum perspicuitate sententiæ.* l. c. cap. xv. p. 21. Certainly it is no small credit to a translator to confine himself closely to the words, and yet at the same time to convey with perspicuity the sense of his original. But respecting this version which Augustine names *the Italic*, a good deal of discussion has taken place amongst the learned conversant in biblical literature, and particularly in the Romish church. For they entertain no doubt, but that the version to which Augustine alludes, was the same with that which was universally received by the Latin church prior to its adoption of the more recent translation from the Hebrew by Jerome. Wherefore they suppose it to have been made in the time

of

those learned and eloquent writers Justin Martyr,
Athenagoras, Quadratus, Aristides, Miltiades,
Tertullian,

C E N T.
II.

Human
causes which
contributed
to forward
the propa-
gation of
Christianity.

of the apostles, indeed possibly by one even of the apostles themselves, and having been approved of by Christ's vicar and the successor of St. Peter, they deem it to be, in point of dignity and credit, if not superior, at least on an equal footing with the Greek text that we have of the two Testaments. To this persuasion is to be attributed the very great and very learned industry which some of the first scholars both in France and Italy have before now displayed, and still continue to display, in endeavours to bring to light and restore the reliques of this venerable version; and indeed, if by any possibility it could be done, to recover the whole of it. For could this treasure be come at, they expect that many corruptions and other blemishes with which they will have it that the Greek and Hebrew copies of the Scriptures are at present deformed, would be happily detected and removed, and the true reading of a variety of controverted passages be established beyond dispute. The very learned Benedictine brethren of the convent of St. Maure, whose erudition reflects so much honour on France, have long been distinguished for their exertions in this way. One of them, John Martianay, who had before acquired no small reputation by an edition of Jerome's works and other literary undertakings, sent out at Paris in 1695, in octavo, what he considered as the genuine old Italic version of the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Epistle of St. James. A very laborious work in three large volumes folio was next published by Pet. Sabatier at Rheims, in 1743, under the title of *Bibliorum sacrorum Latinae versiones antiquae, seu vetus Italica & ceterae, quotquot in codicibus MSS. et antiquorum libris reperiri potuerunt, quae cum vulgata Latina & cum textu Greco comparentur.*—The most recent of those who have laboured in this field is Jos. Blanchini, presbyter of the Oratorian Convent of St. Philip, whose *Evangeliarium quadruplex Latinae versionis antiquae, seu veteris Italicae, ex codicibus manuscriptis aureis, argenteis, purpureis, aliisque plusquam millenariae antiquitatis*, came out in the year 1749, at Rome, in four splendid folio volumes of the largest size. It cannot be necessary that I should direct the reader's attention to any minor, or less distinguished writers, who may have either treated expressly of this subject, or casually touched on any particular part of it. Great however as have been the pains and erudition bestowed on this matter,

C E N T. Tertullian, Tatian, and others, throughout the whole of this century, repelled the slanders and

II.
 Human causes which contributed to forward the propagation of Christianity.

they must, unless I am altogether deceived, be considered as having proved entirely fruitless and unavailing as to the object to which they were particularly directed; although, in a general point of view, the labour that has been used in investigating the Latin copies of the Scriptures may not have been entirely unproductive of advantage. In the first place it is assumed as a fact, by those illustrious scholars who are at present engaged in endeavours to recover the ancient Italic version, that before the time of Jerome, the whole of the church, to which the Latin language was common, made use of one and the same translation of the Scriptures; which having been adopted first at Rome, and been approved of by the bishop of that city, had been communicated from thence to all the Latin churches, and under the sanction of the bishop of Rome been universally introduced into the public worship. I say this is assumed by these eminent writers, but I have not yet observed that any thing like a proof of it has ever been adduced by any one. On the contrary, I conceive it can be shewn by the most irrefragable arguments, deduced not only from the writings that are extant of the ancient Fathers of the Latin church, not only from Jerome, who in the preface to his Latin version of the Four Evangelists says expressly, that the Latin translations of the sacred volume differed wonderfully from each other, and that there were *tot fere exemplaria quot codices*, not only from the most unexceptionable testimony, that the church of Milan and other churches within the confines of Italy itself made use of versions of their own which were different from the rest, but also from those very learned writers themselves, who have devoted so much time and attention to the recovery of the ancient Italic version, that the Latin churches did not all of them, either before the time of Jerome or after, make use of one and the same translation of the Scriptures, but that the versions in use amongst them were various and dissimilar. For not to enter into an examination of any others, the versions published by Blanchini differ so very widely from each other in a great many places, that it would be an utter violation of every sort of probability whatever, to consider them as the work of one and the same translator. In vain does Blanchini contend that this want of harmony in his copies is to be attributed to the carelessness of transcribers; for the

points

and reproaches of its froward and impetuous
adver- C E N T.
II.

Human
causes which
contributed
to forward
the propa-
gation of
Christianity.

points in which they differ are, for the most part, of that nature and importance, that no want of care on the part of the transcribers will account for their disagreement, but it must be attributed to a diversity in the originals from whence they copied. In the next place, these same learned characters assume, that this Italic version, which they consider as having been common to all the Latin churches, was a work of the first century, and that it was undertaken and perfected either by one of the apostles themselves, or at least by some companion and disciple of the apostles. But it is to be observed in the first place, that this is a perfectly gratuitous assumption; for what evidence have they to adduce that will give any thing even like a colour to it? And secondly, what appears entirely to have escaped their recollection, it was not until after the close of the first century that the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume; and consequently it is impossible that any translation of these at least could have been previously undertaken. But what nearly surpasses all belief, and most clearly evinces on what a slippery and weak foundation the opinions of some of the most learned men are not unfrequently built, even when they may seem to be placed beyond the reach of controvery; I say, what is so astonishing as to be almost incredible is, that these illustrious scholars should with the utmost confidence maintain, that that particular translation which Augustine terms the Italic, and to which he assigns the preference over every other Latin one, was that very identical version of the sacred code which they pretend to have been composed in the first century, during the life-time of the apostles, and to have been received and made use of by all the Latin churches after the example of that of Rome. From whence, I pray, do these learned characters derive their information as to this? Do they rely entirely on that passage of Augustine which we have cited above? For most certainly neither in Augustine, nor in any other ancient writer, is there to be found any passage besides this, in which mention is made of the Italic version. But surely in these words of Augustine there is nothing which can afford, even to the most penetrating and sagacious mind, grounds for any thing like a conclusion of this sort. From whence therefore have they their information as to this? From what prime source has

C E N T. adversaries, and demonstrated the extreme
 II. turpi-

Human
 causes which
 contributed
 to forward
 the propa-
 gation of
 Christianity.

all that intelligence been drawn respecting the antiquity, the excellence, the dignity, the authority of a certain I know-not-what Italic translation, which such a number of learned men, not only of the Romish communion, but also of other denominations of Christians, are so ready at communicating to us? From the words of Augustine, try what we may, it is impossible to collect any thing more than this: (I.) That the people of Africa, amongst whom he resided when he wrote, in addition to other Latin translations of the sacred volume, were possessed of one, which by way of distinguishing it from the rest, they termed *the Italic*. From whence however it acquired this appellation is not to be ascertained either from Augustine or elsewhere. Possibly it might have been thus named from its having been brought from Italy into Africa; possibly from its having been the one made use of in certain of the Italian churches; with equal probability may we conjecture that it took this denomination from the country of the person by whom it was made, or from the structure perhaps and polish of its style. Every supposition that we may make as to this, must of necessity be obscure and uncertain. There can be no doubt however but that those who imagine that it was termed the Italic from the circumstance of its having been in common use throughout all the churches of Italy, conjecture ill; for it is known for certain, that the churches of Ravenna and Milan, and others of the more celebrated churches of Italy had, each of them, a peculiar and proper version of its own. (II.) From Augustine's manner of expressing himself, it is to be inferred that the translation which he terms the Italic was, in all probability, a different one from that which was used by the Roman church in the public service. For as the Roman was the principal church of the West, had this been the translation that was publicly made use of in it, Augustine would, without doubt, from motives of respect, have termed it (*Romana*) the Roman one. Augustine always entertained the greatest reverence for the Roman church, in which he considered *Apostolicæ Cathedræ principatum viguisse*, epist. xciii. tom. ii. opp. p. 69. (III.) It appears from the passage under consideration, that what is there termed by way of distinction the Italic version, was not the one made use of publicly in the African churches; for Augustine passes an encomium on it, and wishes that a
 pre-

turpitude and folly of the popular superstitions.

C E N T.
II.

Human
causes which
contributed
to forward
the propa-
gation of
Christianity.

preference should be given to it over every other version. A sort of recommendation for which there could certainly have been no room, had this version been already adopted in the public worship. Indeed the very epithet *Italic*, which he applies to it, is an argument that it had not been so adopted: for had this translation been the one commonly used in the African churches, instead of giving it the title of *Itala*, propriety would have required him rather to term it either *nostra*, or *vulgaris*, or *publica*. *Italic* applied to any thing out of Italy, necessarily implies it to be foreign. (IV.) It is clear that in the opinion of Augustine, which might be either right or wrong, (for he was certainly not possessed of sufficient skill in the learned languages to determine on the merits of a translation of the Scriptures), this same version, whatever it may have been, was preferable to every other translation. Now, in all this, there is certainly nothing which affords the least support to what we have been so much accustomed to have told us respecting an ancient version, termed the *Italic*, which was common to all the Latin churches: on the contrary, it is easy to perceive therein certain things which altogether set aside and confute what we find contended for in so many books on the subject. Since then not a single passage, except this solitary one of Augustine, is to be met with in any ancient author from whence the least information can be gained on the subject, it appears to me that the labour of those who so zealously devote themselves to the recovery of this ancient *Italic* version, must ever of necessity prove fruitless, and that the undertaking in which they thus engage bears a very near resemblance to that of the man who endeavoured to make a collection of the verses that had been sung by the Muses upon Helicon. What we have above remarked, was in part noticed by that ingenious and penetrating scholar Richard Bentley, who hath borne away the palm of criticism from all his contemporaries in Great Britain; and he was, in consequence, led to suspect that the passage in Augustine, on which alone the existence of the ancient *Italic* version depends for support, had been corrupted. The way in which he proposed to correct it was, by substituting the word *illa* for *Itala*, and the pronoun *quæ*, in place of the particle *nam*. To the propriety of this emendation David Casley, to whom it had been communicated by

C E N T. tions [1]. It would be an act of injustice more-
 II. over, were we to omit mentioning, with due
 Human caufes which contributed to forward the propagation of Christianity. praise,

Human
caufes which
contributed
to forward
the propaga-
tion of
Christianity.

Bentley, expreffes his unqualified approbation in his *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the King's library*, London, 1734, fol. except that after the word *illa*, he would add, *Latina*. The Italic verſion, he, like Bentley, conſigns to its proper place amongſt the dreams of the learned. According to theſe then the paſſage in queſtion ought to run thus: *in ipſis interpretationibus illa (or illa Latina) præferatur quæ eſt verborum tenacior*. But I muſt own that this alteration appears to me to have ſomething too arbitrary and violent in it, unſupported, as it is, by the reading of any known copy of Auguſtine in exiſtence. Beſides it is not called for by any neceſſity. For even granting that the paſſage as it ſtands in our copies, is correct, which, I have no doubt it is, and granting alſo that, in the time of Auguſtine the Chriſtians of Africa, in addition to other Latin tranſlations of the holy Scriptures were poſſeſſed of one which they diſtinguiſhed by the title of the Italian, or Italic verſion, every thing that is commonly contended for reſpecting this tranſlation will ſtill remain deſtitute of all ſupport, and the labour that is conſumed in endeavours to recover it may conſequently be conſidered as entirely thrown away.

[1] It is by no means uncommon to hear the different writers of the ancient Apologies for the Chriſtians charged uniformly with this fault, that they have expoſed indeed in an admirable manner the folly of the various religions at that time prevalent in the world, and rendered ſtrikingly manifeſt the falſity of thoſe calumnies with which the Chriſtians were oppreſſed, but have beſtowed little or no pains in demonſtrating the truth and divinity of the Chriſtian religion. To the generality of people it appears that more attention ſhould have been paid to the latter object than to the former, in aſmuch as it required merely a demonſtration of the divine origin of Chriſtianity to overwhelm all other religions, and ſink them into contempt. But it would not be very difficult to adduce many things in reply to this accuſation. For the preſent we ſhall content ourſelves with obſerving, that the authors of the early Apologies for Chriſtianity, did not aſſume to themſelves the office of teachers or maſters, but came forward merely in the character of defenders. Now all that can be required

praise, the exertions of certain philosophers and men of erudition, who had embraced Christianity in various provinces of the Roman empire, and who, from their great authority with the people, and the facility of intercourse which they enjoyed with the more cunning and wily enemies of religion, became highly instrumental in causing many to turn from the paths of error into the way of truth.

VII. With the greatest grief, however, we find ourselves compelled to acknowledge, that the upright and laudable exertions thus made by the wise and pious part of the Christian community, were not the only human means, which in this century, were employed in promoting the propagation of the Christian faith. For by some of the weaker brethren, in their anxiety to assist God with all their might, such dishonest artifices were occasionally resorted to, as could not, under any circumstances, admit of excuse, and were utterly unworthy of that sacred cause, which they were unquestionably intended to support. Perceiving, for instance, in what vast repute the poetical effusions of those ancient

Dishonest artifices occasionally resorted to in the propagation of Christianity.

required of a defender to the full discharge of his duty is, to repel the calumnies wherewith the person accused is charged, and to shew that he had just cause for acting in the way he did. From the nature of their undertaking therefore it could only be expected of the early apologists for Christianity, that they should exonerate those who had embraced it from the reproaches cast upon them by their adversaries, and by pointing out the absurdity of the religions publicly countenanced, make it appear that there was the greatest cause for their deserting them. The business of demonstrating the truth of that new religion, which they had adopted upon their repudiation of Paganism, was, without impropriety, left by them to its masters and teachers.

prophe-

C E N T.

II.

Difingenu-
ous artifices
occasionally
reforted to
in the pro-
pagation of
Christianity.

propheteſſes, termed Sybils, were held by the Greeks and Romans, ſome Chriſtian, or rather, perhaps, an aſſociation of Chriſtians, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, compoſed eight books of *Sybilline Verſes*, made up of propheſies reſpecting Chriſt and his kingdom, with a view to perſuade the ignorant and unſuſpecting, that even ſo far back as the time of Noah, a Sybil had foretold the coming of Chriſt, and the riſe and progreſs of his church [*m*]. This artifice

[*m*] The Sybilline verſes are treated of very much at large, by Jo. Albert. Fabricius in the firſt vol. of his *Bibliotheca Greca*, where the reader will alſo find a particular account given of thoſe writings, which were ſent out into the world under the forged name of Hermes Trimegiſtus. The laſt editor of the Sybilline Oracles, was Servatius Gallæus, under whoſe ſuperintendance and care they were reprinted at Amſterdam 1689, in 4to., corrected from ancient manuſcripts, and illuſtrated with the comments of various authors. To this edition the reader will find added the Magian oracles, attributed to Zoroaſter and others, collected together by Jo. Opſopæus, amongſt which are not a few things of like Chriſtian origin. That the Sybilline verſes were forged by ſome Chriſtian, with a view of prevailing the more eaſily on the heathen worſhippers to believe in the truth of the Chriſtian religion, has been proved to demonſtration, by (amongſt others) David Blondell, in a French work, published at Charenton 1649, in 4to., under the following title, *Des Sybilles célébrés tant par l'Antiquité payenne, que par les ſaincts Peres*. Indeed we may venture to ſay, that with the exception of a few, who are blinded by a love of antiquity, or whoſe mental faculties are debilitated by ſuperſtition, there is not a ſingle man of erudition, in the preſent day, who entertains a different opinion. It may be obſerved, by the way, that Blondell's book was, after two years, republiſhed, under a different title, namely, *Traité de la Creance des Peres touchant l'Etat des Ames apres cette vie, et de l'Origine de la Priere pour les Morts, et du Purgatoire, a l'Occaſion de l'Ecrit attribué aux Sybilles*. Charenton 1651, 4to. The fact, no doubt was, that finding purchaſers were not

C E N T.
II.Disingenu-
ous artifices
occasionally
referred to
in the pro-
pagation of
Christianity.

artifice succeeded with not a few, nay some even of the principal Christian teachers themselves were imposed upon by it; but it eventually brought great scandal on the Christian cause, since the fraud was too palpable to escape the searching penetration of those who gloried in displaying their hostility to the Christian name [n]. By others, who were aware that nothing could be held more sacred than the name and authority of Hermes Trismegistus were by the Egyptians, a work bearing the title of Poemander, and other books, replete with Christian principles and maxims, were sent forth into the world, with the name of this most ancient and highly venerated philosopher prefixed to them, so that deceit might, if possible, effect the conversion of those whom reason had failed to convince [o]. Many other deceptions of this
fort,

not to be attracted by the former title, the bookseller deemed it expedient to have recourse to another.

[a] From what is said by Origen, *contra Celsum*, lib. v. p. 272. edit. Spencer. as well as by Lactantius, *Institut. Divinar.* lib. iv. cap. xv. and by Constantine the Great, in c. 19. of his *Oratio ad Sanctos*, which is annexed to Eusebius, it appears that the enemies of the Christians were accustomed indignantly to upbraid them with this fraud.

[o] That the writings at present extant under the name of Hermes, must have been the work of some Christian author, was first pointed out by Isaac Casaubon in his *Exerc.* I. in *Baronium*, § xviii. p. 54. This has since been confirmed by various writers, Vid. Herm. Conringius, *de Hermetica Ægyptiorum Medicina*, cap. iv. p. 46. Beausobre, *Histoire de Manichéé*, tom. ii. p. 201. Cudworth, *Intellect. System*, tom. i. p. 373, 374. edit. Mosheim. Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, vol. i. p. 442. It may be observed, however, that certain of the learned dissent, in some degree, from this opinion, conceiving that the writings of Hermes originated with the Platonists: they suspect them
however

C E N T.
II.

Disingenu-
ous artifices
occasionally
resorted to
in the pro-
pagation of
Christianity.

fort, to which custom has very improperly given the denomination of PIOUS frauds, are known to have been practised in this and the succeeding century. The authors of them were, in all probability, actuated by no ill intention, but this is all that can be said in their favour, for their conduct in this respect was certainly most ill advised and unwarrantable. Although the greater part of those who were concerned in these forgeries on the public, undoubtedly belonged to some heretical sect or other, and particularly to that class which arrogated to itself the pompous denomination of Gnostics [*p*], I yet cannot take upon me to acquit even the most strictly orthodox from all participation in this species of criminality: for it appears from evidence superior to all exception, that a pernicious maxim, which was current in the schools not only of the Egyptians, the Platonists, and the Pythagoreans, but also of the Jews, was very early recognized by the Christians, and soon

however to have been interpolated and corrupted by the Christians.

[*p*] Blondell in lib. ii. *de Sybillis*, cap. vii. p. 161. from the praises that are continually lavished in the Sybilline verses on the country of Phrygia is led to conclude that the author of them was by birth a Phrygian; and since Montanus, a Christian heretic of the second century is known to have been a native of that region, suspects that the composition of them might be a work of his. The Abbé de Longerue expresses his approbation of this conjecture in his Dissertation *de Tempore quo nata est Hæresis Montani*, which is to be found in Winckler's *Sylloge Anecdotorum*, p. 255. & seq. That the writings of Hermes and a great part of the forged Gospels, together with various works of a similar nature, the disgraceful productions of this century, are to be attributed to the perfidious machinations of the Gnostics, is clear beyond a question.

found

found amongst them numerous patrons, namely, that those who made it their business to deceive with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than censure [g].

C E N T.
II.

VIII. But whilst the circumstances above enumerated conspired most happily to forward the cause of Christianity, the priests and præfects of the different religions that were publicly tolerated in the Roman empire, most strenuously exerted themselves to arrest its progress, not only by means of the foulest accusations, calumnies, and lies, but by frequently exciting the superstitious multitude to acts of wanton and outrageous violence [r]. These efforts of the heathen priesthood the emperors zealously seconded by various proscriptive edicts and laws, the magistrates and presidents of provinces by subjecting the faithful followers of Christ to punishments and tortures of the most excruciating kind, and finally several philosophers and orators by declamation and cavil; in short, throughout the whole of this century the Christians had to contend with an almost infinite series of injuries and evils, and even under the very best and most mild of the emperors that Rome ever knew, were in various districts and

State of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Trajan.

[g] See what I have collected in regard to this, in my *Dissertation de turbata per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesia*, § 41, & seq.

[r] Arnobius *adv. Gentes*, lib. i. p. 16. edit. Herald. *Aruspices has fabulas, (the calumnies against the Christians) conjectores, arioli, vates, et nunquam non vani concinnare fanatici; qui, ne suæ artes intereant, ac ne stipes exiguas consultoribus excutiant jam raris, si quando vos velle rem venire in invidiam compererunt, negliguntur dii clamitant, atque in templis jam raritas summa est.* In regard to this passage the reader may consult what is said by Heraldus.

provinces

C E N T.

11.

State of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Trajan.

provinces exposed to calamities of the most afflictive and grievous nature. At the time of Trajan's accession to the government of the empire there were neither laws nor edicts of any kind in existence against the Christians. That this was the case is clear beyond a doubt, as well from other things that might be mentioned, as from the well known epistle of Pliny to Trajan, in which he signifies to the emperor, that he was altogether at a loss how to proceed with people of this description. Had any laws against the Christians been at that time in force, a man so well versed in the customs and jurisprudence of the Romans as Pliny was, must undoubtedly have been acquainted with them. The fact unquestionably was, that the laws of Nero had been repealed by the senate, and those of Domitian by his successor Nerva. So difficult however is it to abrogate what has once acquired the force of custom, that the Christians as often as either the priests or the populace, stirred up by superstition and priestcraft, thought proper to institute a persecution of them, continued still to be consigned over to punishment. It was this which gave occasion to Eusebius to state that under the reign of Trajan, *per singulas urbes populari motu passim persecutio in Christianos excitabatur* [s]. Such a persecution took place not long after the commencement of this century in Bithynia, at the time when Pliny the Younger was president of that province at the instigation, no doubt, of the priests [t].

IX. The

[s] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. 32. p. 103.

[t] We allude to the persecution treated of by Pliny in that very celebrated epistle of his to the emperor, the
xcvii^b

IX. The attack, however, thus made on the Christians in Bithynia, eventually occasioned a restraint to be put on that immoderate fury with which it had become customary to persecute them. For it having been most clearly ascertained by Pliny, that with the exception of their dissent from the public religion, there was nothing in the principles or conduct of the followers of

C E N T.
II.

Trajan's law
respecting
the Chris-
tians.

xcviith of the 10th book. From this epistle it is manifest that Pliny himself had no wish to interfere with the Christians, but was reluctantly compelled by spies and informers to call them before him and punish them. *Interim*, says he, *in iis, qui ad me tanquam Christiani deferebantur hunc sum sequutus modum*. That these informers against the Christians were the heathen priests is, I think, clearly to be inferred from the following words: *Certe satis constat prope jam desolata templa capisse celebrari, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti, passimque venire victimas quarum adhuc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur*. In this passage the proconsul most plainly intimates the cause of this persecution to have been, that the temples in Bithynia were nearly abandoned, the sacred solemnities intermitted, and scarcely any victims ever presented for sacrifice. But all these things could affect none but the priests and those who had the superintendance of the sacred rites; for to these alone could it be of any material moment that the temples should be frequented and victims be brought to the altars. There can be no doubt then, but that these men had represented to Pliny, into what great jeopardy the rites of heathenism were brought, and it is not at all unlikely that by way of giving additional force to their representations they had stirred up the populace to clamour for the punishment of the Christians. In compliance with these applications, Pliny commanded those persons who, as he says, had been pointed out to him by an informer to be apprehended, and found amongst them two Christian deaconesses; the presbyters, together with the bishop, having most probably either taken to flight on the breaking out of the persecution, or otherwise found means to shelter themselves from its effects. When I, moreover, compare the words of Pliny, with the passage cited above from Arnobius, not a doubt remains with me but that he is to be considered as delivering, not so much his own sentiments, as those which he had collected from the mouths of the priests.

C E N T.
II.Trajan's law
respecting
the Chris-
tians.

Christ deserving of animadversion, and it being at the same time perceived by him, that their enemies in their proceedings against them had no regard whatever either to equity or clemency, he requested of the emperor Trajan, that the mode of coercing the Christians might be regulated by some certain law, intimating his own opinion to be, that on account of their great number and evident innocence they should be treated rather with moderation than severity. In answer to this it was ordered by the emperor, that the Christians for the future should not be officiously sought after, but that if any of them should be brought before the Roman tribunals in a regular way and convicted, they should, unless they would renounce Christianity and again embrace the public religion, be consigned over to punishment. From the first part of this regulation we may naturally infer, that the emperor did not regard the Christians with an unfavourable eye, whilst, from the latter part, it is as obviously to be collected that he was fearful of discovering too much lenity towards them, lest he should thereby exasperate the priesthood and the populace [u].

X. This

[u] It was generally believed for many centuries that the emperor Trajan was the author of the third persecution of the Christians, and we find this very disturbance which they experienced in Bithynia under the government of Pliny, particularly adverted to in an infinite number of books, as the commencement of such persecution. But it is scarcely possible for any thing to be farther removed from the truth than these two notions are. Trajan, so far from having given orders to persecute the Christians, exerted his authority to restrain the persecution of them, which broke out under his reign in Bithynia and other places. Without doubt he was considerably in the wrong in giving directions that persons convicted of having embraced Christianity and refusing

X. This decree of Trajan being registered amongst the public ordinances of the Roman empire,

C E N T.
II.

Effects
produced
by this law
of Trajan.

refusing to return to the religion of their ancestors should be consigned over to capital punishment; a thing for which he is sharply and eloquently rebuked by Tertullian (in *Apologet.* cap. ii.); but most unquestionably it was of the highest advantage to the Christians that he forbade any search or inquiry to be made after them. For under this arrangement the Christians might hold their secret assemblies in security, and by merely observing the dictates of common prudence, might effectually defeat all the malice of their enemies. Nor could the priests any longer take occasion, from the emptiness of the temples, and the rarity of victims, to compel the magistrates to call in question the Christians. It also supplied the magistrates with the power of silencing and putting down any popular clamour or seditions. But this illustrious act of beneficence, for which the Christians were indebted to Trajan, lost not a little of its effect, as I have before observed, by the mandate which was annexed to it for punishing such as might be convicted of being Christians, and refuse to recant; in which, as has, after Tertullian, been observed by several, the emperor disagrees with himself. For whilst by forbidding them to be searched for or enquired after, he avows to the world that there was nothing in them pregnant with danger to the state, or in anywise deserving of punishment, he, in the next breath, by ordering the execution of such as when convicted of having embraced Christianity might persist in professing it, pronounces them to be guilty of a crime that could scarcely be punished with too great severity. This inconsistency of Trajan with himself, may be best accounted for by supposing him to have been fearful that he might irritate the priests and the multitude, and perhaps excite popular commotions, if he should grant an absolute impunity to men labouring under so great ill will; his conduct in this respect was certainly not influenced by superstition, for had he been actuated by this principle he would not have forbidden, but on the contrary have commanded the Christians to be sought after, with a view to avenge the insult offered by them to the gods. With regard however to the punishment ordered to be inflicted on obstinate Christians, another reason may be assigned. Pliny had written to him that the obstinacy of the Christians was, in his judgment, of itself, a crime deserving of death, although there appeared to be nothing improper in the re-

C E N T

II.

Effects
produced
by this law
of Trajan.

empire, was the cause of many Christians being thenceforward put to death, even under the most mild and equitable emperors. For as often as any one was to be found who would run the risque of becoming an accuser, and the person accused did not deny the crime imputed to him; nothing further was left to the magistrate than to endeavour, by threats and torture, to subdue the constancy of the person thus convicted; which if he failed to effect, the pertinacious and obstinate delinquent was, according to this law of Trajan, to be delivered over to the executioner. Under this regulation Simeon the son of Cleopas and bishop of Jerusalem, an old man of one hundred and twenty years of age, being about the year cxvi, accused by the Jews before the præfect of Syria, and persisting for several days, although put to the torture, in an absolute refusal to repudiate Christianity, was, contrary

ligion which they refused to renounce: *neque enim dubitabam, qualecumque esset quod faterentur, perversitatem certe & inflexibilem obstinationem debere punire.* The opinion, thus expressed by Pliny, although unjust, and obviously unworthy of a man of his intelligence, the emperor thought proper to adopt, and the Christians were in consequence consigned over to punishment, not as men who had insulted the gods, and were inimical to the public religion, but as citizens who refused to pay obedience to the mandates of their sovereign. Whether the former or the latter of these reasons may be preferred, certain it is, that neither in Pliny's epistle nor in the decree of the emperor is there any enmity manifested towards the Christian religion, or any traces of superstition to be discovered. Those who consider the disturbance thus experienced by the Christians on the borders of the Euxine as the commencement of a general persecution of them under Trajan, seem not to be aware that from this very epistle of Pliny, as well as from other arguments, it can be made appear that the Christians had in the time of Trajan been put to trouble in various places before ever Pliny had been appointed to the government of Bithynia.

to the inclination of his judge, condemned to suffer death upon the cross [v]. In conformity to this same law likewise, Ignatius the renowned bishop of Antioch, who had been accused by the priests, and was not to be moved by the threats of even the emperor himself, was in the course of the same year brought to Rome by an imperial order, and delivered over as a prey to wild beasts [w]. But what will no doubt appear to the reader particularly astonishing is, that this sufficiently harsh and inhuman law excited the discontent of such of the Christians as glowed with a more fervid zeal, on account of its lenity, inasmuch as for want of inquiry being made by the magistrate, or of some one being found to step forward as an accuser, they were often times precluded from finishing their earthly course by a glorious and triumphant sacrifice of their lives in the cause of Christ. Hence it be-

C E N T.

II.

Effects
produced
by this law
of Trajan.

[v] Vid. *Eusebius Histor. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 103. & seq.

[w] The *Acts of the Martyrdom of Ignatius* have been frequently published, and are to be found amongst the *Patres Apostolici*. Of the antiquity of the work there can be no doubt; it should seem however to have been corrupted in several places. From these Acts it appears, that Trajan adhered most scrupulously to the provisions of his own law. In the first place he did not lay hands on Ignatius until the latter was regularly brought before the public tribunal by an accuser; in the next place, when the accused confessed himself guilty of the charge, he endeavoured by various arts of persuasion to prevail on him to execrate the name of Christ, and join in the worship of the Roman deities; and lastly, finding him altogether inflexible in his determination not to renounce Christianity, he adjudged him to suffer death. We also learn from these Acts that the emperor deemed it inexpedient to let this holy man suffer at Antioch, lest the fortitude which he displayed might operate to increase the veneration for his character, and also have the effect of augmenting the number of the Christians.

C E N T. II. came by no means unusual for numbers of them voluntarily to hand over their names as Christians to the Judges [x]. This unseasonable eagerness to obtain the honours of martyrdom, however, having in the course of time become perniciously prevalent, it was at length deemed expedient to repress it by a law.

State of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Hadrian.

XI. Although the law of which we have been speaking was not in any respect repealed or altered by the emperor Hadrian, who succeeded Trajan in the year of our Lord cxvii, nor had the Christians to complain of any infringement of it by the presidents or inferior magistrates, yet by the heathen priesthood means were at length discovered for enervating its force, and rendering its protection of the objects of their hatred inefficient. Finding that but few individuals could be prevailed on to take upon themselves the unthankful and perilous office of an accuser, they

[x] A very remarkable instance of this kind of proceeding is mentioned by Tertullian (in *Lib. ad Scapulam*, cap. v. p. 88. opp. edit. Rigalt.) as having occurred under the reign of Hadrian. *Arrias Antoninus in Asia cum persequeretur inslanter*, (i. e. according to the law of Trajan he caused all such as were accused before him and convicted, to be executed) *omnes illius civitatis Christiani ante tribunalia ejus se manufacta obtulerunt*, (that is to say, being discontented at no one's coming forward against them as an accuser, and perceiving that the proconsul was determined strictly to abide by the emperor's injunction, and not to make any inquiry after them, they resolved to become accusers of themselves,) *cum ille, paucis duci jussis, reliquis ait: Ω δειλοι ει τιλετε αποδνησκειν, κρημιδας η Βροχας εχειτε. O miseri, si mori vultis, nec lacus vobis desunt nec precipitia.* The proconsul no doubt felt particularly delicate as to punishing the Christians who had thus become accusers of themselves, since it was a case that had not been provided for by the emperor: having therefore by way of terror made an example of a few, he dismissed the rest with marks of indignation and contempt.

made

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Hadrian.

made it their business, on every favourable occasion, to excite the lower orders of the people to join in one general disorderly clamour for the punishment of the Christians at large, or of certain individuals amongst them, whom they were taught to consider as particularly obnoxious. Amongst other opportunities that offered, they were accustomed particularly to avail themselves of those seasons when the multitude were drawn together by the exhibition of any public games or other spectacles. To general and public accusations of this sort no degree of hazard whatever was attached; whilst on the other hand it was a thing of no ordinary danger amongst the Romans to turn a deaf ear to them, or treat them with disrespect. In consequence of these tumultuary denunciations therefore, a considerable number of Christians, at different times, met their fate, whom the magistracy would otherwise most willingly have permitted to remain unmolested [y]. Indeed, under the reign of Hadrian it

[y] Nothing could be more artful than this contrivance of the priests to enervate and elude the law of Trajan respecting the mode of accusing the Christians. For the presidents did not dare to regard with an inattentive ear the demands of the united commonalty, lest they might give occasion to sedition. Moreover, it was an established privilege of the Roman people, grounded either on ancient right or custom, of the exercise of which innumerable instances are to be found in the Roman history, that whenever the commonalty were assembled at the exhibition of public games and spectacles, whether it were in the city or the provinces, they might demand what they pleased of the emperor or the presidents, and their demands thus made must be complied with. Properly this privilege belonged to the Roman people alone, whose united will possessed all the force of a law, inasmuch as the supreme majesty of the empire was supposed to be resident therein; but by little and little the same thing came to be assumed as a right by the

C E N T. II. it was so much the more easy for the heathen priesthood to get the multitude to unite in one general clamour for the destruction of the Christians, since, as Eusebius expressly relates, the Gnostic sects, which seem to have been made up in part of evil designing persons, and in part of madmen and fools, were at that time continually obtruding themselves on the attention of the world; and the crimes and infamous practices of which these were guilty, being indiscriminately imputed to the Christians in general, the public prejudice was in no small degree increased against the whole body of them. [z].

Hadrian's
new law in
favour of the
Christians.

XII. This highly iniquitous and impious artifice of the priesthood being seen through by Serenus Granianus the proconsul of Asia, he addressed a letter to the emperor on the subject, pointing out what an unjust and inhuman thing it was, to be every now and then shedding the blood of men convicted of no crime, merely with a view to silence the clamours of a misguided tumultuous rabble. Nor was the representation of this discerning and judicious man disregarded by his master: for an edict was soon after directed by Hadrian to Minutius Fundanus, the successor of Serenus, and to the other governors of provinces, forbidding them to pay attention to any such public denunciations, and signifying it to be his pleasure, that for the fu-

the inhabitants of most of the larger cities. When the multitude therefore collected together at the public games united in one general clamour for the punishment of the Christians at large, or of certain individuals belonging to that sect, the presidents had no alternative but to comply with their demand, and sacrifice at least several innocent victims to their fury.

[z] Eusebius *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. vii. p. 120. & seq.

ture

ture no Christians should be put to death except such as had been legitimately accused and convicted of some sort of crime [a]. Possibly

C E N T.
II.

Hadrian's
new law in
favour of the
Christians.

[a] This imperial rescript is given by Justin Martyr, in his first Apology *pro Christianis*, § 68, 69. p. 84. opp. edit. Benedict. and copied from thence by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. ix. p. 123.—That it was sent not only to Minutius, but also to the other presidents of provinces, is manifest from a remarkable passage of Melito cited by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 184. as also from an edict of Antoninus, *ad commune Asiae*, of which we shall presently have to say more. Regarding this law of Hadrian in a general way, it appears in point of justice and clemency by far to surpass the edict of Trajan. For whereas it was directed by the latter that such Christians as obstinately refused to renounce the religion they professed should be punished capitally, the law of Hadrian forbids any Christian to be put to death except he were convicted according to the legal and established mode, of having transgressed the Roman laws. This seems to admit of being adduced as a proof, and indeed has been so brought forward by many, that Hadrian tolerated the Christian religion, and forbade any one to be persecuted on account of professing it. But I cannot help suspecting that this is giving the emperor credit for more lenity than it was ever his intention to display, since I observe, that even after the promulgation of this rescript, the Christians were continually put to death without having any other crime objected to them than that of their religion. Trajan had enacted, that for any one inflexibly to persevere in the profession of Christianity should be a crime punishable with death, and Hadrian does not appear to have directed that this kind of perseverance should be considered in a less criminal light. I therefore do not conceive that this law of Hadrian, in its import, differed very materially from that of Trajan, but that the punishment of death continued still to be inflicted under the imperial sanction on all such Christians as were convicted of professing a contempt for the gods, and persisted in refusing to alter their opinion. *Si quis ergo accusat et ostendat quidpiam contra leges ab iis factum, tu pro gravitate delicti statue.* The form of expression is at least ambiguous, and left to the presidents the most ample power of punishing the Christians, since the worship of the gods was a thing enjoined by the laws.

C E N T.

II.

Hadrian's
new law in
favour of the
Christians.

also the two masterly apologies for the Christians, that were drawn up and presented to the emperor by those pious and learned characters, Quadratus and Aristides, and of which we of the present day have unfortunately to regret the loss, might have contributed not a little to the softening of the imperial mind [b]. This lenity of Hadrian towards the Christians was looked upon by some as indicative of a disposition to favour the Christian religion, and therefore when he subsequently caused temples without images to be erected in all the cities, a suspicion arose in the minds of many that he had it in contemplation to assign to Christ a place amongst the deities of Rome, and meant to consecrate these edifices to his service [c].

XIII. The

[b] These apologies are treated of by Eusebius *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. iii. with whom compare Jerome *Epist. ad magnum Oratorem*, p. 656. tom. iv. opp. edit. Benedict. and in *Catalog. Scriptor. Eccles.*

[c] Our authority for this is Lampridius in *Vita Alexandri Severi*, cap. xliii., who after remarking that Alexander wished to have assigned Christ a place amongst the Roman deities, continues, *quod et Hadrianus cogitasse fertur, qui templa in omnibus civitatibus, sine simulacris, jusserat fieri. Quæ ille ad hoc parasse dicebatur: sed prohibitus est ab iis, qui consulentes sacra repererant, omnes Christianos futuros si id optato evenisset.* The historian in this place evidently gives us the conjecture of the multitude, which, from his own words, appears to have been grounded solely on the circumstance of Hadrian's having erected a number of temples, in none of which were placed any statues of the gods, and which, resting on no better foundation, must have been extremely vague and uncertain. The suspicion excited by the erection of these temples could never have suggested itself, had it not been for the opinion previously entertained of the emperor's leaning towards Christianity. But from whence this opinion took its rise I am unable to say, unless it was from the equity and humanity displayed by him in his edict respecting the Christians. Probably the priests and their adherents, upon finding themselves cut
off

XIII. The Christians, however, had under the reign of Hadrian to encounter a still more fierce and cruel enemy in a leader of the Jews named Barchochba, or, “the son of the star”, whom his infatuated countrymen regarded as the long promised Messiah who was to restore the fallen fortunes of the house of Israel. Impatient of the injuries and contemptuous treatment which they were continually experiencing at the hands of the Romans, the Jews had once already, during the reign of Trajan, had recourse to arms for redress. The experiment entirely failed; but their wretchedness and calamities continuing still to increase, these hapless people, at the instigation, and under the conduct of the abovementioned daring character, a man thoroughly conversant in blood and rapine, were, in the year cxxxii, induced to hazard a repetition of it [d]. During the continuance of the war which he had thus excited, Barchocba subjected to the most cruel tortures as many of the Christians as he could get within his power, and put all such of them

C E N T.
II.

Barchochba
an enemy
of the
Christians.

off from all hopes of suppressing the Christians, might disseminate a rumour that the emperor himself was by no means ill disposed towards this new religion. But how vain and futile these conjectures were is rendered manifest, as well by the whole tenor of his life, which was replete with instances of the grossest superstition, as by the positive testimony of Spartian (*in Vita Hadrian. cap. xxii.*) whose words are *sacra Romanæ diligentissime curavit; peregrina contempsit*. It may be added, that with regard to the temples erected by Hadrian without any statues of the gods, very able men have long since declared it to be their opinion, that the emperor intended to have had them dedicated to himself.

[d] Vid. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. 6. Buxtorfius, *Lexico Talmudico*, voce כוכב, where the reader will find every thing that is to be met with in the Jewish writings respecting this man collected into one view.

C E N T.

II.

Barchochba
an enemy
of the
Christians.

to death without mercy as refused, in spite of the various torments thus inflicted on them, to abjure Christianity [*e*]. The event of this contest, which was for a while maintained on both sides with incredible valour, was most disastrous to the Jews. An innumerable host of this ill-fated people having fallen by the sword, and Palestine being almost wholly depopulated, the dreadful scene was closed by Hadrian's ordering Jerusalem, which had just begun to revive again from its ashes, to be finally overthrown and laid waste, and causing a new city, called after himself *Ælia Capitolina*, to be erected on a part of its site [*f*]; at the same time debarring the Jews from every access to such new city, as well as to any of their former sacred places in its neighbourhood, under the severest penalties [*g*].

State of the
Christians
under
Antoninus
Pius.

XIV. Upon the death of Hadrian, so immediately did the aspect of affairs change, that it seemed as if his rescript respecting the Christians had expired with him. For scarcely had Antoninus Pius assumed the government of the empire, when the Christians found themselves assailed in various places by numerous accusers, who being obliged by the abovementioned edict of Hadrian to alledge some sort of crime against them, and probably finding the more equitable of the presidents, disinclined to consider the bare

[*e*] Justin Mart. *Apolog.* ii. *pro Christianis*, p. 72. edit. Paris. Hieron. *Catalog. Script. Eccles. in Agrippa Castore.*

[*f*] A particular history of this new city has been given to the world by the learned Deyling. It is annexed to the fifth volume of his father's *Observationes Sacrae.*

[*g*] See amongst others, Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Tryphone*, p. 49. 278. edit. Jebbian. Sulpitius Severus, *Histor. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xxxi. p. 245. edit. Cleric. Hieronymus, *Comment. in Sophoniam*, c. 2.

profession

C E N T.
II.State of the
Christians
under
Antoninus
Pius.

profession of Christianity in that light, had recourse to the expedient of charging them with impiety or atheism. This new attack was met by Justin Martyr with an apology presented to the emperor, in which he ably repels various other calumnies with which the Christians were assailed, as well as completely vindicates them against this last atrocious charge of impiety. The effect however produced by this apology was but trifling. At length an immediate application having been made to the emperor by several of the magistrates, for the purpose of ascertaining the extent to which the populace, who were thus continually calling for the blood of the Christians, were to be gratified in their demands, he commanded them to take for their direction the law of Hadrian, and not put any Christian to death unless it should appear that he had committed some crime against the state [b]. But even this was not found sufficient to prevent those ebullitions of popular fury which the priesthood continually made it their business to promote. For in consequence of some earthquakes which shortly after occurred in Asia, and which the priests, with their accustomed malevolence, ascribed to the displeasure of the gods at the toleration of the Christians, the multitude burst through every restraint, and heaped on these fancied authors of their calamities every

[b] This appears not only from the emperor's edict *ad commune Asiæ*, but also from the words of Melito, *apud* Euseb. *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 148. who reminds the emperor Marcus Aurelius that his father addressed letters to the Larissians, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and in fact to the Greek provinces in general, forbidding them to have recourse to any tumultuary proceedings against the Christians.

C E N T.
II.State of the
Christians
under
Antoninus
Pius.

species of outrage and injury. A representation of the grievous afflictions to which they were thus exposed having been submitted to the emperor by the Christians, he addressed a severe edict to the whole region of Asia, commanding, that unless the Christians should be convicted of some sort of crime they should be discharged with impunity, and that the punishment to which, in case of conviction, they would have been subjected, should, upon their acquittal, be inflicted on their accusers [i].

XV. The

[i] An imperial edict to this effect is extant in Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 126.) who says, that he took it from Melito's Apology for the Christians, addressed to the emperor Marcus. By certain of the learned, however, this edict has been thought not to belong to Antoninus Pius, but to his successor Marcus Aurelius; but the reasons on which this opinion are grounded are, unless I am altogether deceived, of no weight whatever. For to pass over the testimony of Eusebius, as well as certain particulars in the edict itself, which are not in the least applicable to Marcus, there are two things which in my opinion most clearly prove that Eusebius was not wrong in ascribing it to Antoninus Pius. In the first place Eusebius copied it from an apology addressed by Melito to the emperor Marcus. But who can believe, if Marcus Aurelius had published such an edict respecting the punishment of the accusers of the Christians, that Melito would have deemed it necessary to write a work expressly for the purpose of exciting in him a compassion for the Christians? In the next place, those earthquakes of which the edict makes mention, and which gave occasion to the people of Asia to commence their attack on the Christians. occurred in the time of Antoninus Pius. *Adversa*, says Capitolinus, (in his *Life of Antonine*, cap. ix. p. 268. tom. i. *Scriptor. Hist. August.*) *ejus temporibus hæc provenerunt: Fames de qua diximus, circi ruina, Terræ Motus, quo Rhodiorum et Asiæ oppida conciderunt: quæ omnia mirifice instauravit.* But it is clear that those of the learned who attribute this edict to the emperor Marcus, do so merely with a view to extenuate the afflictions which the Christians suffered under Antoninus Pius, and to make it appear as if, after the slight perfe-

XV. The security and tranquillity enjoyed by the Christians under this edict of Antonine lasted

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

persecution to which they were exposed at the commencement of Antoninus's reign, the Christians had enjoyed, as it were, a perfect calm to the very end of his government. In doing this, however, they have paid a greater regard to their own private opinion, than to the faith of history. Notwithstanding, moreover, that the issuing of this edict by Antonine was unquestionably productive of considerable advantage to the Christian cause, and imposed a restraint on the officious forwardness of evil-disposed persons, yet the interests of Christianity would have been benefited in a much higher degree had he repealed that law of Trajan, which awarded the punishment of death to all such Christians as should be convicted of having abandoned and refuse to return to the religion of their ancestors. The law of Trajan was however suffered to remain in full force, and yet at the same time this edict of Antonine, of a nature altogether repugnant to it, was introduced into the forum. Iniquitous and cruel judges might therefore, if they thought proper, cause both the accuser and the accused to be put to death; the former under the edict of Antoninus Pius, the latter under that of Trajan, which none of the emperors had thought it proper to repeal. Of a case of this kind a very notable example is recorded by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. v. cap. 21. p. 189. Apollonius, a man respectable for his gravity and learning, was, under the reign of Commodus accused of being a Christian. The judges forthwith condemned his accuser to have his legs broken and to be put to death: for by the edict of Antonine it was ordained, that capital punishment should be inflicted on all accusers of this sort. But by these same judges was Apollonius himself also, after that he had publicly rendered an account of the religion that he professed, and openly acknowledged himself to be a Christian, adjudged to suffer death. For by an ancient law, says Eusebius, it was enacted, that if any Christian should be once regularly brought before the public tribunal, they should on no account be dismissed with impunity, unless they would repudiate their religion. Now what other ancient law could this be that was so directly repugnant to the edict of Antonine than the rescript of Trajan to Pliny? By thus artfully having recourse to ancient laws that had not been expressly repealed, did the iniquity and injustice of the Roman magistrates

C E N T.

II.

State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

lasted no longer than until the year clxi, when the government of the empire passed into the hands of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who from his great attachment to the Stoic system of discipline acquired the surname of “The Philosopher.” At the very commencement of this emperor’s reign the ancient practice of preferring public accusations against the Christians was vigorously resumed; and as many of the persons thus accused as acknowledged themselves to be followers of the religion of Christ, and refused to change their tenets, were delivered over to the executioner. Upon this occasion it was that Justin Martyr addressed to the emperor his second apology for the Christians, a composition much resembling his former one, both as to style and argument; but which was so far from exciting in the mind of the emperor any thing like lenity or compassion towards those on whose behalf it was drawn up, that after its appearance the calamities of the Christians were increased throughout the whole of the Roman empire. Nor did it appear sufficient to the emperor to free the enemies of Christianity from those restraints which his father had imposed on them: but by the publication of various edicts inimical to the Christians he held out, as it were, an invitation or incitement to the people to become their accusers [k]. It appears, indeed,

as

magistrates frequently find means to deprive the Christians of every benefit to which they were entitled under enactments of a more recent date.

[k] Melito in his *Apology apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 147.* makes express mention of certain new edicts promulgated against the Christians in Asia, in consequence of which they were exposed to open attacks from the vilest of men, both by day and by night: and

that

as well from other authorities, as particularly from the tract written by Athenagoras in defence of the

C E N T.

II.

State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

that these edicts must have been of the most harsh and severe kind is unquestionable, since Melito adds, that the new imperial edict, *καινον διαταγμα*, was so extremely inhuman, that the issuing of it even against barbarous enemies would not have been justifiable: *ὁ μὴ δὲ κατὰ Βαρβάρων πρέπει πολεμίων*. Melito, indeed, professes himself to be ignorant whether or not this edict was issued by the emperor. But this could surely be nothing more than a prudent dissimulation in him. For who would ever have been so bold as to forge imperial edicts? Who amongst the judges could have been found sufficiently daring to give to these fictitious edicts the force of real ones? And, with no better sanction than could be afforded by such fraudulent mandates to deprive Roman citizens of their lives and worldly possessions? The crime was of that magnitude that it could scarcely have suggested itself to the mind even of the most hardened wretch; and to its execution so many difficulties would have been opposed, that no one but a madman could have promised himself the least success in attempting it. In enumerating therefore the real and actual persecutors of the Christians we must, after recording the names of the emperors Nero and Domitian, assign the third place to that imperial philosopher, whose wisdom has not ceased to command admiration, even in the present day, the most sapient Marcus Aurelius; inasmuch as he was the author of such laws against the Christians as a just and good man would never have enacted, even against a set of barbarous enemies. For the emperors that had intervened between Domitian and him, instead of exciting, had uniformly studied to repress and discountenance any persecution of the Christians. A fact with which the emperor is in no very obscure terms upbraided by Melito, although the state of the times in which he wrote obliged this apologist to speak with some reserve. It were to be wished that this edict of the emperor Marcus had reached our days, since without doubt we should have been able to gather from it the grounds of that hatred which he had conceived against the Christians. But to the primitive professors of Christianity it appeared more expedient to sink the remembrance of the laws by which the progress of their religion was opposed, than to perpetuate it. A hint, however, is supplied by one passage in Melito, which may enable us, with some degree

C E N T.
II.State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

the Christians, that Marcus did not absolutely repeal the edict of his father which forbade the Christians to be put to death unless they should be convicted of some sort of capital offence [1]; but

gree of probability, to guess at the nature of this infamous edict. By this law of the emperor Marcus, he says, the most shameless characters, and those who were covetous of other men's property (*τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἐρασαί*), were invited to turn informers against the Christians, and to hunt after them both by day and by night. Now the conclusion to which these words inevitably lead is, that in this edict there was a prospect held out to avaricious and money-loving men of increasing their own wealth by the spoliation of others. This then being established, it seems to be highly credible, indeed almost certain, that the emperor held out pecuniary recompence as an allurements to people to become accusers of the Christians, and directed that the goods and other property of those who might be convicted of any crime, should be adjudged to the persons through whose exertions the delinquents had been brought to justice. Such a law might not indeed fail to produce its designed effect on the minds of those who coveted other men's goods, but such a law was very justly characterised by Melito, when he pronounced it altogether unworthy of a good and wise emperor. It was not in this way that Nero, it was not in this way that Domitian attacked the Christians.

[1] It is clear from various documents, and from this tract of Athenagoras in particular, that the enemies and accusers of the Christians under the reign of Marcus, endeavoured with the utmost earnestness to fix on them three different species of crimes. 1st. The most unqualified impiety or atheism. 2dly. The celebrating of Thyeftean banquets, that is, feasting on the flesh of murdered infants. 3dly. Œdipodean or incestuous sexual intercourse. Hence I think it is manifest, that it was not the will of the emperor to have the Christians put to death merely on account of their religion, but that he confirmed the law of Antoninus. For if it had been sufficient to accuse the Christians of defection from the religion of their ancestors, and manifesting a contempt for the gods of the country, as it was under the reign of Trajan, there could have been no necessity for charging them with calumnies like the above. But as the laws of the empire were particularly strict in regard
to

but, through the iniquity of the judges, the greatest facility was afforded to accusers in establishing any false charges which they might bring forward against the Christians; and the accused, in defiance of the laws of the empire, were, without either being regularly convicted of, or confessing themselves to have committed, any sort of crime, declared to have incurred the penalty of death [m].

C E N T.
II.
State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

From

to accusers, and forbid any Christian to be put to death unless convicted of some sort of crime, there was no other course left open to the malice and improbity of the enemies of Christianity but to devise certain heinous offences, and endeavour by every possible means to fix them on its professors.

[m] The history of the persecution at Lyons, which took place, as I have elsewhere shewn, under the reign of this emperor, in the year clxxvii. affords a very sufficient illustration of what is here stated. This persecution had its origin in a popular tumult or contention that took place between the Christians and the heathen worshippers. During its continuance a great many of the former were cast into prison; but owing to no one's coming forward as an accuser, and proving them to have committed some sort of crime, the hands of the magistrates were completely tied up in regard to them. By way, therefore, of obtaining an ostensibly legal sanction for the gratification of their malice, the soldiers and other enemies of the Christians prevailed, by means of threats, on certain of the servants of those whom they had apprehended, to become accusers of their masters. But what these wretches charged their masters with was not sacrilege, or a contempt for the public religion, but actual crimes, and those identical crimes too, which, under the reign of Marcus, were, by slander, attributed to the Christians, namely the celebrating of Thyestean banquets, and an incestuous sexual intercourse. To this testimony of servants against their lords the judges gave credit, or rather pretended to give credit; and, in defiance of the order of proceeding prescribed by the law, put the Christians to the rack; endeavouring, by torments of various kinds, to extort from them a confession of what they were thus charged with. In vain was it that these

C E N T.

II.

State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

From whence this ill-will of the emperor towards the Christians proceeded, is not to be ascertained from any memorials that have reached our times. It may, with great probability, however, be conjectured, that from the representation of the philosophers, to whose guidance he appears entirely to have surrendered himself, he was led to regard the Christians as a set of absurd, irrational, obstinate and conceited men ;

unfortunate people persisted, with the utmost constancy, to the last, in asserting themselves innocent ; their fate had been predetermined on ; they were pronounced guilty, and were in consequence consigned over to various kinds of death. Vid. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. 2. There can be no doubt but that, in the other provinces, a nearly similar course was followed ; so as to preserve somewhat of an imposing air of justice, and make it appear as if the Christians were condemned, not for their religion, but on account of their crimes. And here we cannot but direct the reader's attention to the peculiar infelicity of the times of Marcus Aurelius, than whom a juster or more sapient emperor is supposed never to have existed ! The monarch, a prince in no respect ill inclined, gave himself up to philosophical meditation, and troubled himself but little as to the way in which the concerns of his empire might be managed. In the mean time, the magistrates taking advantage of this his indifference as to state affairs, made every thing conform itself to their will and pleasure, and scrupled not most grossly to violate those laws for which they professed themselves to entertain the highest veneration. They made no search or inquiry indeed, after the Christians, since that would have been contrary to the edict of Trajan ; they furthermore manifested their respect for the laws of the empire by not inflicting punishment on any Christian, unless accused as such ; and not only accused of being a Christian, but also proved by witnesses to have committed some heinous offence. But then, to suit their own purposes, they would, as we have seen, admit the testimony of slaves, and the veriest refuse of mankind ; and upon no better evidence than that of the vilest of mortals, would condemn men as guilty, whose constancy in protesting their innocence even torments of the most excruciating nature were found unable to subdue.

and therefore, upon the principles of that harsh and rigid system of moral discipline to which he was devoted, conceived it expedient rather to destroy than to tolerate them [n].

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under
Marcus
Aurelius.

XVI. Under

[n] It has for a long time been with me a matter of doubt whether the emperor Marcus Aurelius was so great a character as he has been esteemed for ages, and still continues to be considered by almost every one capable of forming an opinion on the subject. If our estimate of him be indeed drawn solely from those of his writings which remain, it seems to be scarcely possible that his worth should be over-rated; but if his actions be taken into the account, and brought to the test of reason, we shall find the matter wear a very different aspect. That he was a good man, although in no small degree a superstitious one, is what I do not in the least doubt; but that he at all merited the title of a good emperor and prince, is to me a matter of some question. But for the present I will pass over this, and content myself with briefly inquiring whether the condition of the Christians was not worse under the reign of this philosopher and man of genius, than it had ever been under that of any of the preceding emperors who were strangers to philosophy. To the opinion of such of the learned as attribute the ill-will of Marcus Aurelius towards the Christians to superstition, I feel it impossible for me to subscribe. Had superstition given rise to his severity, he would, without doubt, have considered their religion alone as a sufficient reason for commanding them to be punished; but that such was not his opinion is certain, as we have above pointed out. By far more likely is it, that his immoderate lenity, which was but little removed from utter carelessness and sloth, and which originated in that stoical evenness and severity of mind which they denominate apathy, occasioned him to shrink from the trouble of curbing the licentiousness of evil disposed men, and also made him look with a tranquil indifference on actions highly criminal and oppressive. To which it may be added, that a man devoted to contemplation, and employing a considerable portion of his time in philosophical speculations, probably cared but little as to what was done in the empire, or as to the fidelity and uprightness with which the presidents and magistrates might discharge the important duties appertaining to their various offices.

C E N T.

II.

Afflictions
of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Marcus.

XVI. Under no emperor, therefore, subsequently to Nero, were the Christians exposed to weightier, or

offices. The conjecture, however, which, in my opinion, comes nearest to the truth, is, that the philosophers by whom he was beset, and who held the Christians in detestation, instilled into his mind a wrong idea of the Christian tenets; and having to deal with a man of a credulous and easy disposition, found means to persuade him, that in the worshippers of Christ, an irrational, turbulent, and pernicious sect had arisen, a sect in fact, which it was on every account highly proper to repress; and in this opinion I am confirmed by a remarkable passage in the eleventh book of his work, *De Rebus ad se pertinentibus*, § iii. wherein he professes himself to entertain but an unfavourable opinion of the fortitude and contempt of death exhibited by the Christians. Marcus himself had never seen any of the Christians encounter death; and therefore, for whatever he may have reported of their behaviour under such trying circumstances, he must unquestionably have been indebted to the magistrates, and those philosophers by whom he was surrounded, and who, of course, did not fail to represent them in that light in which it was their wish for him to regard them. The words of Marcus are: "To what an admirable state must that soul have arrived which is prepared for whatever may await her—to quit her earthly abode, to be extinguished, to be dispersed, or to remain! By prepared I mean, that her readiness should proceed from the exercise of a calm, deliberate judgment, and not be the result of mere obstinacy, like that of the Christians; and that it should be manifested, not with ostentatious parade, but in a grave, considerate manner, so as to make a serious impression on the minds of other people." In this passage, the fortitude displayed by the stoics in the act of death, is compared by the emperor with the constancy of the Christians under similar circumstances. For the former he expresses a respect; of the latter he evidently speaks with contempt. Under the influence, and with the never-failing support of reason, the philosopher is represented as encountering death with a deliberate steadfastness of soul, or, in other words, as meeting death with tranquillity, because he knows that death can never be productive of evil to him; whilst the Christian, on the contrary, if we listen to the emperor Marcus, dies altogether irrationally, without any other confidence or consolation

or more numerous afflictions than they suffered during the reign of the illustrious Marcus Aurelius,

C E N T.

II.

Afflictions of the Christians under the reign of Marcus.

solation than what is supplied by a certain stubbornness and pertinacity of mind, for which no pretext is to be found either in common sense or reason. From hence it is manifest, that those who possessed the ear of the emperor had persuaded him that the Christians were a set of irrational, rude, illiterate, ignorant men, an opinion which led him naturally to conclude, that the alacrity with which they encountered death could only be the fruit of obstinacy and perverseness. Whoever they might be that instilled into the mind of the emperor such an idea of the Christians, they most certainly practised on him a very base imposition; since the Christians were possessed of weightier, and by far better reasons for meeting death without dismay, than ever the whole race of stoics had been able to supply, and in the fortitude which they displayed on quitting this earthly state, were influenced by a much sounder judgment than that by which the stoic sect were governed. But it cannot excite our wonder that the emperor, after his mind had received the above impression, should deem it expedient to extirpate the Christians. Dangerous, truly, must have been a sect which encouraged its votaries to encounter every sort of torment unappalled, and meet even death itself with disdain, upon no better a principle than that of a fullen, blind, irrational obstinacy. But to proceed with the emperor's contrasted portraits. The philosopher, we are told, encounters death with firmness and composure, unaccompanied by any tragical display: that is, unless I entirely mistake the emperor's meaning, he does not, like those who make their exit on the stage, indulge in declamation, and endeavour to gain over the minds of the spectators by an affected bombastic kind of eloquence, but preserves a magnanimous silence, and meets his fate with a quiet and unshaken dignity. Not such, says Marcus, is the conduct of the Christian; for he, regardless of what propriety would suggest, appears to take the deaths exhibited in tragedies for his model; and when the fatal moment arrives, expatiates at length on his hilarity, his hope, his confidence, and his contempt of death. The emperor, no doubt, had heard that it was customary for the Christians, in the concluding act of their lives, to offer up thanksgivings to Almighty God, to commend their souls into his keeping by fervent prayer, to exhort the spectators to

C E N T.

II.

Afflictions
of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Marcus.

Aurelius, whom posterity have been taught to regard as the best and wisest emperor that Rome ever saw. Nor were there ever more *apologies* sent forth into the world on behalf of the Christians than were in his time offered to the public; for in addition to Justin Martyr, of whom we have already spoken, Melito, bishop of Sardis, Athenagoras, a philosopher of Athens, Miltiades, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian the Assyrian, and others whom it is unnecessary to enumerate, made it their business, in various literary productions, as well to render the innocence and piety of the Christians unquestionable, as to demonstrate the sanctity of the religion which they professed, and to expose the madness and absurdity of those other religious systems to which the world in general was so fondly attached. Of these works there are some that have reached our days, but others have perished through the ravages of time [o]. Amongst

renounce superstition, to glorify Christ in hymns, and to do many other things of a like kind; which could not fail to appear displeasing in the eyes of a stoic, whose leading maxims were, that it was incumbent on a wise man to maintain at all times an uniformity of aspect and demeanor; that every disturbance of the mind was reprehensible; and finally, that under every change of circumstances, by whatever brought about, the most perfect equability or evenness of temper was invariably to be preserved. Under the influence of sentiments like these, it was natural for the emperor to consider the Christians as meeting death, not in a philosophical way, but rather in the style of tragic characters. Hence also, may we account for his being moved but little by their afflictions. Indeed, according to the principles of the sect to which he belonged, he ought not to have known what it was to be moved at all.

[o] The apologies of Miltiades and Melito are those of which we have to regret the loss; the rest are still extant.

the

the many who, under the reign of Marcus, were put to death for their adherence to the religion of Christ, the most distinguished were those very celebrated characters, Justin the philosopher, who suffered at Rome, and Polycarp, who met his fate at Symrna. Both of these sealed their attachment to the cause of their blessed Master with their blood, in the year clxix [p]. To none, however, hath posterity assigned a higher place in its estimation than to the Christians of Lyons and Vienne, who, in the year clxxvii, were, in great numbers, made to encounter death under various excruciating and terrific forms, in consequence of their having been falsely charged by certain of their inferior servants or slaves, with the commission of crimes almost too shocking even to be named. The most eminent of these Gallic martyrs, was Pothinus the bishop and parent of the church of Lyons, a venerable character of the age of ninety and upwards, who, not long before, had, with certain others, travelled from the east into Gaul, and with great care and industry established there that Christian church or assembly, which was doomed, in a particular manner, to experience the devastating fury of this very remarkable and tremendous persecution [q.]

C E N T.
II.Afflictions
of the
Christians
under the
reign of
Marcus.

XVII. It

[p] The acts of the Martyrdom of Justin Martyr and Polycarp are to be found in Ruinart's *Acta Martyrum sincera et selecta*, and in some other works. Concerning the year and month of Polycarp's death, the reader may consult a very copious and learned dissertation of the Abbé Longuerue in Winckler's *Sylloge Anecdotorum*, p. 18. 25.

[q] Respecting this persecution of the Lyonese, without question the most celebrated, and in all probability the most bloody and cruel that took place in any part of the Roman empire during the reign of Marcus, there is extant

C E N T.

II.

The miracle
of the
Thundering
Legion.

XVII. It is said, however, that some short time before his death, namely, in the year clxxiv, the

in Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. 2. an excellent epistle from the church of Lyons to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, which I should conceive it impossible for any one to read without emotion. The thing, as we have above observed, although pre-determined on, was yet carried into effect under a specious shew of legal formality, lest the laws of the empire should appear to have been in any respect infringed. The circumstances of the affair were briefly these: A popular tumult having been excited respecting the Christians, and many of them having, with a view to quiet the public mind, been thrown into prison, certain of their servants were prevailed upon by threats to come forward and accuse their masters of having committed very heinous offences, namely, those identical crimes which, during the reign of Marcus, had been very customarily imputed to the Christians. Having in this way established somewhat of a colourable ground whereon to act, the magistrates proceeded to inflict tortures of various kinds on the imprisoned Christians; and even went so far as to put many of them to death. The number of persons confined, however, being considerable, and one of them, a man of some consequence, named Attalus, having declared himself a Roman citizen, the president of the province seems to have felt that he had been too precipitate, and would not venture to proceed farther in the business without ascertaining the emperor's pleasure. The matter having been submitted by him to the emperor, Marcus wrote back word, that "all such as professed themselves Christians should be put to death, but that those who denied being so, should be dismissed uninjured." Under the authority of this answer, therefore, capital punishment was inflicted on all who refused to renounce Christianity; such of them as were Roman citizens being beheaded, and the rest cast for a prey to wild beasts. This rescript of the emperor to the president of Lyons seems to place his inveterate enmity towards the Christians in the clearest light imaginable; since, if respect be had solely to his words, as above-cited from Eusebius, he gives exactly the same commands as Trajan did, and allows the Christians to be put to death on account of their religion alone, without any thing criminal being alleged against them. But, it must be confessed, that there is a difficulty in coming to any certain conclusion with

the sentiments of Marcus underwent a considerable change with respect to the Christians, and that in consequence of his having been very essentially benefited by them on a particular

C E N T.
II.

The miracle
of the
Thundering
Legion.

with regard to the sense of this rescript, since the letter of the president to the emperor is not now extant. What the president wrote, in all probability, was, that the Christians stood convicted by the testimony of a sufficient number of credible witnesses of having committed many very great crimes in their secret assemblies, but that this charge was denied by the accused with the utmost pertinacity, (at least in this way it was certainly necessary for him to write, if his object was to excuse the cruelty he had exercised upon so many of these unfortunate people) and that it had therefore become requisite for him to apply to the emperor for direction as to whether the witnesses or the Christians themselves were to be believed. Supposing then the president to have written to the emperor in these or any similar terms, the imperial answer will admit of this construction;—With regard to the truth of an accusation which has been substantiated according to the rules of law, we see no reason for entertaining any doubt. From such therefore of the persons implicated as will not consent to abjure Christianity we deem it proper to withhold our pardon; but should there be any who are inclined to return to the religion of their forefathers, it is our will that they should be set at liberty. At least the absence of the president's letter, so necessary to a right understanding of the emperor's answer, leaves us altogether in a state of uncertainty as to which constituted the prevailing motive with Marcus in directing the punishment of the Christians, their religion or their crimes. With regard to the time of this persecution, the reader will find it proved in a dissertation of mine *de Ætate Apologiæ Athenagoræ*, (*Syntagm. Dissert. ad Histor. Eccles. pertin.* vol. i. p. 315.) by irrefragable arguments, that it did not take place as has been conjectured by certain of the learned in the year 167, but in 177. Compare *Colonia Histoire litteraire de la ville de Lyon*, tom. ii. Sæc. ii. p. 34. and *Baratier de Successione Romanor. Pontiff.* p. 207. 217. That the church of Lyons, however, had been but recently established when this grievous affliction befel it, its own epistle, as preserved by Eusebius, most clearly demonstrates, for the Asiatic brethren are therein (p. 156.) told that in the multitude of Christians who suffered on that occasion were comprehended those by whose labour and industry chiefly the church there had been first established.

occasion,

C E N T.
II.The miracle
of the
Thundering
Legion.

occasion, in the course of a war in which he was engaged with the Marcomanni and the Quadi, two of the bravest German nations, he was induced entirely to relieve them from every sort of penalty and hazard to which they had been previously exposed. The story is, that being so effectually furrounded on all sides by the enemy, during a season of severe and long continued drought, as not to be able to gain access to any place from whence water might be obtained, the Roman emperor and his forces were in the most imminent danger of perishing from heat and thirst. When things however were arrived at the last extremity, a band of Christians, who were at that time serving in Marcus's army, having earnestly cried to heaven for assistance, the Almighty was pleased at once to manifest a regard for their prayers, by causing the clouds on a sudden to pour down rain in abundance, accompanied with thunder and lightning. Reanimated by the very critical relief thus afforded them, the Romans lost not a moment in attacking their enemies, whom this alteration in the aspect of the heavens had filled with consternation and dismay, and succeeded in obtaining over them a most signal and important victory. This wonderful event made a very deep impression on the mind of the emperor, and so entirely changed his sentiments with regard to the Christians, that he publicly proclaimed to the world his conviction of their virtue and good faith towards him, and decreed that the heaviest punishments should await all their enemies and accusers. Such is the account given of the matter by the early Christian writers. But it must not pass without remark that in this narrative there are some

some things manifestly false; and that with regard to the critical fall of rain accompanied with thunder and lightning, to which the Roman army was indebted for its preservation, it possesses not the characteristic features of a true and unquestionable miracle; but may, without any difficulty, be accounted for upon natural grounds, and without in the least interfering with the established laws of divine providence [r].

C E N T.
II.
The miracle
of the
Thundering
Legion.

XVIII. During

[r] Concerning the thundering legion, who are reported through their prayers to have obtained from heaven a copious fall of rain, by which the emperor Marcus and his army were extricated from a most perilous situation, at a moment when every expectation and hope of relief had entirely vanished, a controversy of no little length was some time back carried on amongst the learned; some contending that the event ought to be ascribed to the immediate interference of the Deity himself, who for the moment made a change in the established order of nature for the purpose of producing an amelioration in the condition of the Christians who were living in a most wretched state of oppression under Marcus; whilst others maintained that in what actually happened there is nothing to be discovered which manifests any thing like a deviation from the ordinary and established laws by which the universe is governed. The arguments on either side are to be collected from a dissertation of Daniel Laroque *de Legione Fulminatrice* subjoined to the *Adversaria Sacra* of Matthew Laroque his father, and a discourse by Herman Witsius on the same subject, annexed to his *Ægyptiaca*. Of these writers the former impugns the truth of the miracle, the latter strains every nerve to defend it. At a subsequent period some letters passed on the subject between Sir Peter King, lord chancellor of Great Britain,* and Mr. Walter Moyle an English gentleman of distinguished sagacity and erudition, a Latin translation of which, accompanied with some remarks of my own, will be found at the end of my *Syntagma Dissertationum*

* Dr. Mosheim has here fallen into an error. Mr. Moyle's correspondent on this occasion was not the lord chancellor King, but the Reverend Richard King of Topham in Devonshire.

C E N T.

II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

XVIII. During the reign of Commodus, the son and immediate successor of Marcus, no very

ad disciplinas sanctiores pertinentium. King, sides with those who maintain that Marcus and his army were saved by a miracle; Moyle takes the field in support of the contrary position. As for any other authors who may have written on the subject, they do nothing more than either merely repeat, or else endeavour, in one way or other, to strengthen and confirm the arguments which had been previously adduced by their above mentioned predecessors. For my own part, I can perceive no call for my entering much at large into this affair, and I shall therefore content myself with stating my opinion on it in a few words. And that I may do this with the greater regularity and precision, I will, in the first place, confine myself to a statement of such things as are, or at least ought to be, granted to either party as indisputable; my next step shall be to point out what is evidently false: and, having divested the matter of these particulars, I will in the last place take into consideration what remains of it, and which must of necessity comprise all that can fairly and properly be made the subject of dispute. In the first place then, it is certain that Marcus and his army were at one particular time in the course of his war with the Quadi and Marcomanni involved in a situation beyond all comparison perilous. Marcus was better fitted to shine as a philosopher than an emperor. Intimately acquainted as he was with the maxims and discipline of the stoics, he yet appears to have been a mere novice in the military art, and through his imprudence to have given the enemy such advantages over him as nearly to involve both himself and his army in utter destruction. It is also certain that he was unexpectedly extricated from this most critical situation by means of a copious fall of rain, accompanied with thunder and lightning, and obtained the victory. It is moreover unquestionable, that not only the Christians, but also the emperor and the Romans, considered this sudden fall of rain to which the army owed its preservation as a præternatural event; with this difference however, that the former viewed it in the light of a miracle wrought by the God whom they worshipped, in answer to their prayers, whilst the latter conceived themselves to be indebted for this signal deliverance to either Jupiter or Mercury. That such was the light in which this event was regarded by the Romans is placed beyond all doubt by the united testimony of Dion Cassius, Capitolinus, Claudian, and Themistius, but still

very heavy or general persecution of the Christians appears to have taken place; at least nothing

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

still more particularly by the column erected by Marcus himself at Rome which remains in existence at this day, and on which Jupiter (*Pluvius*) is represented as re-invigorating the parched and exhausted Romans by means of a plentiful rain. That there were a number of Christians at that time serving in the imperial army appears to be not quite so certain as the foregoing; and there are not wanting those who expressly deny this to have been the case, on the ground that the ancient Christians are known, for the most part, to have disliked the military profession, and held wars in abhorrence. But although this may be very true in a certain degree, it is yet to be proved from various cotemporary authorities, that in this century not a few of the Christians did actually carry arms, and that the Christians in general were not such decided enemies to warfare of every kind as altogether to condemn a military life. For it can be shewn that they considered such wars lawful as were necessarily entered into for the safety or defence of the empire, and had no objection to any of the brethren serving in such patriotic wars; and no one can deny but that of this description was the war carried on by Marcus against the Quadi and Marcomanni. It appears also that whenever any soldiers were led to embrace Christianity, no such thing as an abandonment of the profession of arms was imposed on them, but they were permitted to pursue that course of life to which they had previously devoted themselves. There seems therefore to be nothing that should oppose itself to our considering this also as certain, that amongst the soldiers of Marcus there were many Christians. But if this admit of no doubt, it is impossible not to grant it as likewise unquestionable, that when the Roman army was reduced to such an extremity for want of water as to have nothing short of utter destruction before their eyes, these Christian soldiers, conformably to the dictates of the religion which they professed, addressed themselves to God in prayers for relief. The same men would doubtless attribute the unexpected fall of rain, accompanied with thunder and lightning, and the consequent discomfiture of their enemies, to the special interference of the Almighty on their be-

half;

C E N T.
II.State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

nothing of this kind is recorded by any historian. There are not wanting, however, individual

half; would offer up their thanks to him as the author of their deliverance, and in their report of the thing to their absent brethren, would state, that in consequence of their prayers to Christ, the Roman army had been extricated from a situation beyond all comparison adverse and perilous. Attending duly to this, it must be easy for any one to perceive, not only how the rumour of this miracle arose, but also how it came to be a matter of firm belief with the Christians that the Romans had been saved through the prayers of the brethren. Having then thus dismissed what may be considered as certain, I next proceed to point out such particulars as cannot appear credible to any person conversant in history, and which the industry of some very eminent scholars of modern times has stripped of even that semblance of truth which they might formerly wear. In the first place then, it is false, although apparently supported by the authority of Apollinaris as quoted by Eusebius, that there was a separate and entire legion of Christians in the Roman army. For, to pass over many other things which go completely to refute this idea, it is certain that Christianity was not, under the reign of Marcus, so far countenanced, as for it to appear credible that even a separate cohort, and much less a legion of Christians should have been tolerated in the Roman armies. Since this leading circumstance then appears to have no foundation whatever in truth, it must of necessity be false, that when every hope had vanished this legion presented themselves in front of the army, and implored the divine assistance; it must be false, that before ever their prayers were finished, the fall of rain, accompanied with thunder and lightning, took place; and finally false that the emperor attributed the glory of having extricated his army, to this legion, and that by way of manifesting his sense of their inestimable deserts, he conferred on them the title of *The Thundering Legion*. The thundering legion, it has been clearly proved by Scaliger and Henry Valesius, as well as by other learned men since their time, was in existence anterior to the reign of Marcus, and could consequently never have derived its distinguishing name from this miracle. The probability is, that some Christian but little acquainted with the Roman military esta-

dividual instances of Christians that were put to death during this period, the most remarkable

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

establishment, having heard that amongst the legions there was one distinguished by the name of the Thundering Legion, was induced hastily to conclude that this title had been given to it in consequence of the thunder with which God had on this occasion answered its prayers, and passed off what was merely a gratuitous assumption of his own, on others for the fact. Moreover, that Marcus did not consider himself as indebted for his deliverance to the favour in which the Christians stood with heaven, is rendered indisputable by the Antoninian column at Rome which was erected with the knowledge and consent of this emperor, and on which the preservation of the Roman army is ascribed to Jupiter. Lastly, these things being rejected as false, it becomes impossible for us to credit what is told us of letters having been issued publicly by Marcus in which the piety of the Christians is extolled, and their enemies and accusers are denounced. The epistle of Marcus to this effect, which is at this day extant and generally to be found added to the first apology of Justin Martyr, bears on the very face of it, as is confessed even by those who in other respects support the miracle of the Thundering Legion, the most manifest marks of fraud, and seems to have been the work of some man altogether unacquainted with Roman affairs, who lived most likely in the seventh century. Mention however having been made of these letters of Marcus by Tertullian in *Apologet.* cap. v. it has been concluded by many that such documents were actually in existence in his time, but that they afterwards perished through the ravages of time. The words of Tertullian are *at nos e contrario edimus protectorem si literæ Marci Aurelii gravissimi imperatoris requirantur, quibus illam Germanicam sitim Christianorum forte militum precationibus impetrato imbri discussam contestatur.* But there are many things which tend to weaken and invalidate Tertullian's testimony in this instance. I pass over the word *forte* in the above passage, which has been laid hold of by learned men as a proof, either that Tertullian was not satisfied of the truth of this miracle, or else that he had never seen those letters of the emperor's; for to say nothing of what is contended for respecting the use of this particle by Tertullian, I see plainly that neither of the above points can be proved from it. The word manifestly relates, not to Tertullian, but to the

C E N T.

11.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

able of which is that of Apollonius a dignified and eminent character, who, together with

the emperor and his epistle, and the sense of the passage is this; that Marcus did not explicitly own or avow that the fall of rain was obtained through the supplications of his Christian soldiers, but expressed himself with some reserve, and only signified that *possibly* this great benefit might have been derived from their prayers. I also pass over the circumstance that Tertullian in another place (*Libro ad Scapulam*, cap. iv. p. 87. ed. Rigalt.) where he similarly makes mention of this rain, obtained through the prayers of the Christians, is altogether silent as to the epistle of Marcus. But there are two things, for which we have not to seek very far, which, I think, must be allowed entirely to enervate and render nugatory the testimony which Tertullian is supposed, in the above cited passage, to afford in support of these letters. The first is, that from what Tertullian has handed down to us respecting the purport of this imperial epistle, it is, unless I am most egregiously deceived, very plainly to be seen that the paper which he had before him at the time of his penning that passage, was a document to which we have before had occasion to direct the reader's attention, namely, the edict *ad commune Asiae*, issued by Antoninus Pius, whom, we well know, it has been by no means an uncommon thing for writers to confound with his successor Marcus Aurelius. For in proceeding with his statement Tertullian observes, *sicut non palam ab ejusmodi hominibus penam dimovit, ita alio modo palam dispersit, adjecta etiam accusatoribus damnatione et quidem tetriciore*. Now the meaning of these words I take to be, first, that Marcus did not exempt the Christians from every sort of penalty to which they had been previously liable, that is, he did not absolutely interdict or prohibit their being punished: secondly, that he, however, contrived in effect to render these penalties, as it were, merely nominal; or in other words, that he wisely ordered matters so as that the judges should find it no very easy matter to bring the Christians within the lash of the law: and thirdly, that he suspended over accusers who should fail in their proof a similar punishment to that which would have awaited the accused on conviction. It will be sufficient for me then, I conceive, to remark, that in these three respects the statement of Tertullian most aptly agrees with the edict of Antoninus Pius *ad commune Asiae*. For by that edict the emperor did not exempt

with his accuser, underwent capital punishment at Rome [s]. The fact was, that none of the laws

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

[s] Vid. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxi. p. 189. Apollonius was put to death under the law of Trajan; his accuser, as before noticed, under that of Antoninus Pius.

exempt the Christians from every kind of penalty; but he ordained that no Christian should be subjected to punishment unless convicted of some sort of crime, and by this provision most certainly restricted, within very narrow limits, the power of punishing the Christians at all: and, finally, he directed that such accusers of the Christians as might fail of making good their charge against them, should be punished for their temerity. It appears to me, therefore, manifest, that Tertullian fell into the mistake of imputing to the son the edict of the father, whose name was similar; and that, having understood that Marcus and his army had experienced an unhopèd for deliverance from a most perilous situation, through the prayers of the Christians, he was led to conclude, that gratitude for so signal a benefit had actuated him to the promulgation of this edict. The second thing which renders the testimony of Tertullian, as to the epistle of Marcus, a mere nullity, is the persecution of the Christians at Lyons and Vienne, of which we have above taken notice. This persecution took place in the year clxxvii, in the third, or if you had rather, in the fourth year after the victory obtained over the Marcomanni and the Quadi. But who, let me ask, can believe that the emperor, after having, in the year clxxiv, in a public epistle, passed the highest encomium on the Christians, and declared that the heaviest of punishments should await their accusers, should all at once, in the year clxxvii, so entirely change his mind as to give them up for a sacrifice to the malice of their enemies, and enact, that all such of them as would not return to the religion of their ancestors should undergo capital punishment? Having disencumbered the question, then, of these particulars, the only thing that remains to be determined is, whether that fall of rain to which the Roman army owed its preservation in the Marcomannic war, is to be accounted as one of those extraordinary interpositions of divine providence which we term

VOL. II. G miracles?

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

laws which had been enacted by different emperors respecting the Christians, of which some indeed were lenient, but others most severe, having been repealed, the judges could at any time, when it might suit their humour, by straining matters a little, contrive, with an apparent shew of justice, to inflict capital punishment on all such Christians as might be accused before them. Of this evil the full weight was never so sensibly experienced by the Christians as under the reign of Septimius Severus, the successor of Commodus. For although this emperor, upon his first assuming the government, manifested a disposition to favour the Christians, to one of whom he stood indebted

miracles? For if it can be ascertained that it belongs to the class of miracles, there can be no doubt but that it ought to be attributed to the prayers of the Christians who were at that time serving in the army of Marcus. Now, the question, when thus simplified, appears to me extremely easy of solution. By the unreserved assent of the learned it is now established as a maxim, that nothing can properly be considered as belonging to the class of miracles, for the occurrence of which any natural cause can be assigned. But in this fall of rain, although it might not have been expected or even hoped for, there was nothing which it exceeded the ordinary powers of nature to accomplish, nothing which of necessity required the peculiar interposition of Omnipotence. For nothing can be more common than for the long droughts of summer to be succeeded by copious falls of rain, accompanied with thunder and lightning in a degree truly terrific. Nor can it appear at all wonderful that some of the enemy should have been struck dead by the lightning, or that in consequence thereof their whole army should betake themselves to flight; for it was the opinion of all the German nations that every thunder bolt was commissioned of the Deity himself; and, under the influence of this persuasion, it was customary for the effects of lightning to be regarded by these people as particularly ominous.

for

for a very signal benefit [t]; yet under cover, as it should seem, of the turbulence of the times which succeeded, the magistrates and enemies of Christianity took occasion to rekindle the flames of persecution, and to carry their oppression and cruelty to the greatest extent. By the concurrence of abundant authorities, it is rendered indisputable, that in some provinces, towards the close of this century, the Christians were exposed to such a dreadful series of calamities and sufferings as it had scarcely ever fallen to their lot to encounter before. It was the distressing view presented by these accumulated miseries of the brethren, which gave birth to that very ingenious and eloquent defence of the Christians, the *Apologeticon* of Tertullian [u].

XIX. To

C E N T.
II.

State of the
Christians
under Com-
modus and
Severus.

[t] Tertullian (in libro *ad Scapulam*, c. iv. p. 87. edit. Rigalt) says, *Ipse Severus pater Antonini Christianorum memor fuit. Nam et Proculum Christianum, qui Torpacion cognominabatur, Eubodæ procuratorem, qui eum per oleum aliquando curaverat, requisivit, et in palatio suo habuit usque ad mortem ejus: quem et Antoninus optime noverat, laetæ Christiano educatus. Sed et clarissimas feminas et clarissimos viros, Severus sciens hujus seclæ esse, non modo non læst, verum etiam testimonio exornavit, et populo furenti in nos palam restitit.* The same writer also, in his *Apologet.* cap. v. p. 62. edit. Havercamp. clearly excepts Severus out of the number of emperors that had discovered an enmity to the Christians.

[u] From this work of Tertullian it is clearly to be perceived how impiously and cruelly the Christians of that period were dealt with before ever Severus was prevailed on to take part against them. The common people, at the instigation, no doubt, of the heathen priests, called aloud for the blood of the Christians; the other orders did not trouble themselves about them. *Apologet.* cap. xxxv. p. 300. *Sed vulgus inquit. Ut vulgus, tamen Romani, nec ulli magis depostulatores Christianorum, quam vulgus. Plane ceteri ordines pro auctoritate religiosi ex fide, nihil hosticum de ipso senatu, de equite, de castris, de palatiis ipsis spirat.* But it should seem that some of the presidents by no means

CENT.
II.Philosophers
inimical to
the Christian
cause.

XIX. To the flame thus prevailing in the breasts of the priests and the populace, not a little

thought the Christians deserving of punishment, but exercised their cruelty on them merely with a view of obtaining popular favour; for in c. xlix. p. 425, Tertullian presses this home upon them in the following terms: *De qua iniquitate sevitia non modo cecum hoc vulgus exultat et insultat, sed et quidam vestrum quibus favor vulgi de iniquitate captatur, gloriantur, quasi non totum quod in nos potestis, nostrum sit arbitrium.* The greatest part of the magistrates, however, did not scruple to acknowledge the falsehood of the calumnies wherewith the Christians were assailed, and were ready to admit the injury that was done them; but complained that, without a breach of various laws that stood unrepealed and in full force, it was impossible for them to turn a deaf ear to their accusers. This excuse is met by Tertullian with much address, and combated at considerable length in chapters iv, v, & vi. His exordium is as follows: *Sed quoniam, cum ad omnia occurrit veritas nostra* (But when, by a simple exposure of the truth, we have fully refuted all those calumnies and charges that are urged against us), *postremo legum obstruitur auctoritas adversus eam* (i. e. the truth) *ut aut nihil dicatur retractandum esse post leges* (i. e. that it would be inconsistent with Roman constancy to revoke, or deviate from, what has once been established by law), *aut ingratis necessitas obsequii preferatur veritati*, (i. e. a judge, although it may be disagreeable to him, and he may perceive that the cause of truth will suffer, should yet, in his decisions, adhere strictly to the letter of the law) *de legibus prius excurram vobiscum ut cum tutoribus legum.* Now, men who could in this way make the laws a cloak for their own injustice and cruelty, must certainly have been very worthless characters. If we except the law of Trajan, which permitted the Christians to be called in question merely on account of their religion, and directed them to be punished in case they would not renounce it, the remaining imperial laws and rescripts were rather favourable to the Christians than otherwise; at least there was not one of them to which a judge, if he had been so minded, might not have given a favourable interpretation. But it was necessary for these malevolent characters, these tools of the priesthood, and candidates for popular fame, to disguise their real motives under some pretext or other, and to make it appear as if they were borne out by somewhat

little fuel was added by the writings of some of those who affected to possess a more than ordinary share of wisdom and virtue, and were distinguished by the titles of Philosophers and

CENT.
II.
Philosophers
inimical to
the Chris-
tian cause.

somewhat of reason in their decisions. Such was, however, the spirit of ferocious violence with which this persecution was carried on, that even the restraint imposed by the law of Trajan with respect to making any search after the Christians, was disregarded; for they were broken in upon and apprehended in their sacred assemblies, without any accusation having been laid against them. *Quotidie*, says Tertullian, cap. vii. p. 80. *obsidemur, quotidie prodimur: in ipsis plurimum catibus et congregationibus nostris opprimimur.* So far, therefore, from strictly adhering to what was dictated by the laws, these most unjust judges, in the severities which they exercised towards the Christians, did not scruple to fly directly in the teeth of the most positive injunctions. The punishments inflicted on the Christians were as cruel as the enmity borne them by their enemies was savage. The following notices of them occur in Tertullian, cap. xii. p. 125, et seq. *Crucibus et stipitibus imponitis Christianos. Ungulis eradiis latera Christianorum. Cervices ponimus. Ad bestias impellimur. Ignibus urimur. In metalla damnamur. In insulas relegamur.* And in cap. xxx. p. 279, 280, we find nearly a similar enumeration. It appears also, that the common people would not unfrequently expend their fury on the Christians without the intervention of the magistrates, and run even into such extremes of malice as to dig up their dead bodies from the grave for the purpose of tearing them to pieces. Cap. xxxvii. p. 308. *Quoties etiam prateritis vobis (the presidents) suo jure nos inimicum vulgus invadit lapidibus et incendiis, ipsis Bacchanalium feriis: nec mortuis parcunt Christianis, quin illos de requie sepulture, de asylo quodam mortis jam alios, jam nec totos, avellant, dissecant, distrahant.* Now, all these things, it is observable, were done previously to the manifestation of any ill will towards the Christians on the part of the emperor, and whilst the laws that had been anciently enacted against them remained comparatively quiescent, and, as it were superseded by others of rather a compassionate tendency. What, then, may we suppose to have taken place when Severus avowed himself the enemy of Christianity, and not only revived, in all their rigour, the ancient laws respecting it, but added to them new ones of still greater severity?

C E N T.
II.

Philosophers
inimical to
the Christian
cause.

Orators. Of these, one of the most celebrated was a disciple of the modern Platonic school, named Celsus, who, towards the close of this century, attacked the Christians in a declamation teeming with invective and reproach, which, at a subsequent period, was met by a very masterly refutation from the pen of Origen [v]. At Rome likewise, nearly about the same time, the Christians were assailed by one Crescens,

[v] Origen, who, in the third century, was induced, by the advice of Ambrosius, to give to the world his well known confutation of the calumnies and falsehoods of Celsus, conceived his adversary to have been an epicurean, for which, however, he seems to have had no other reason than that of there having been an epicurean of some celebrity of the name of Celsus. But if the opinions of Celsus were what even Origen himself states them to have been, there can be no doubt but that he was utterly averse to the doctrines of Epicurus, and belonged to what we term the modern Platonic or Alexandrian school. The reader, who wishes to see this question examined in detail, may consult my Preface to the German translation of Origen. Before the appearance, however, of any remarks of mine on the subject, it had been very learnedly shewn by that eminent scholar Pet. Wesseling (*Probabilia*, cap. xxiii. p. 187. et seq.), that Celsus could by no means be considered as belonging to the class of the epicureans. We cannot close this note without observing, that abundant proof is to be collected from the weak and injurious declamation of Celsus of the very great detriment which the cause of Christianity sustained in consequence of the corruptions introduced by the Gnostics, who, subsequently to the time of Hadrian, had attained to some degree of consequence and fame; for the exceptionable particulars on which this malevolent adversary chiefly grounds his attack, were not recognized by those of the orthodox faith as belonging to the Christian scheme, but were merely fancied improvements that had been tacked to it by the Gnostics. Celsus, as appears from his own shewing, had been chiefly conversant with men of this latter description, and fell into the error of attributing to the Christians in general, maxims which were recognized only by this particular sect.

a cynic

a cynic philosopher, who, according to the prevailing custom of the age, arraigned them of the grossest impiety. His attack was in a particular manner directed against Justin Martyr, who had exposed to the world the secret vices and deceptive arts of those who styled themselves philosophers; nor was it for a moment relinquished until this very celebrated Christian father had undergone the punishment of death [w]. As cotemporary with these, it should seem that we may reckon Fronto, the rhetorician of Cirta in Africa, who made it his endeavour, in a studied discourse that he sent abroad into the world, to establish against the Christians that vile calumny, so frequent in the mouths of the mob, of their countenancing an incestuous intercourse of the sexes [x]. Many more

C E N T.
II.Philosophers
inimical to
the Christian
cause.

[w] Vid. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xvi. as also the Second Apology *pro Christianis*, of Justin himself, in which he predicts that the philosophers, and particularly Crescens, whose ignorance and corrupt morals he had made it his business to expose to the world, would endeavour by every possible means to bring about his destruction.

[x] There are two passages in Minucius Felix which relate to this calumniator of the Christians; from one of which we learn his country, from the other his name and mode of life. In cap. x. *Octavius*, p. 99, where he treats of the Thyestean banquets, which the Christians were accused of celebrating, he thus expresses himself: *Et de convivio notum est. Passim omnes loquuntur. Id etiam cirtensis nostri testatur oratio.* Then follows a description of these feasts, which, without doubt, was taken from the discourse of Fronto, which he had just been praising. To this passage he thus replies in the words of his *Octavius*, cap. xxxi. p. 322. *Sic de isto (the banquet) et tuus Fronto, non ut affirmator testimonium fecit, sed convicium ut orator aspersit.* By learned men it has been suspected, and certainly not without great appearance of reason, that this Fronto was one and the same with Cornelius Fronto the rhetorician, who taught the emperor Marcus eloquence. As long as the

C E N T. more persons of this description, in all probability,
 II. laboured to defame the Christians; but neither
 their

Philosophers
 inimical to
 the Chris-
 tian cause.

the Christian church could number within its pale none but men who were unskilled in letters and philosophy, it was regarded with a silent disdain by those amongst the Greeks and Romans who assumed to themselves the title of philosophers. But when, in the second century, certain philosophers of eminence became converts to the Christian scheme, such as Justin, Athenagoras, Pantænus, and others, without, however, renouncing either the name, garb, or mode of living of philosophers, or giving up the instruction of youth; when, moreover, these Christianized philosophers made it their business to demonstrate in the schools the vanity of the Greek philosophy, and propounded therein a new species of philosophic discipline, which intimately embraced the principles of Christianity, and accommodated itself to the form of that religion which they had espoused; and when, lastly, these same illustrious converts to Christianity made a point of exposing to the world the secret vices, the contentious squabbles, and the actual knavery of the pagan philosophic sects, the heathen philosophers perceived at once the peril of their situation, and that their credit with the world, as well as every thing else that could be dear to them, was brought into the greatest jeopardy. They therefore united with the priesthood and the populace in clamouring for the extermination of the Christians, and whilst they endeavoured, by the propagation of false accusations and calumnies, not only orally, but in their writings, to draw down destruction on the Christians at large, were particularly assiduous in directing the public vengeance against their apostate brethren who had gone over to the new religion. It was not, therefore, so much with a view to uphold what they considered to be the cause of truth, as to support their own tottering reputation, authority, and glory, and to secure to themselves the common necessaries of life, such as food and raiment, motives in fact of much the same kind with those which had previously excited the hostility of the priesthood, that these philosophers were induced to take the field against the Christians. This war of the philosophers against Christianity had its commencement under the reign of the emperor Marcus, who was himself a philosopher, and made it his study to encourage and gratify philosophers: neither had any of the Greek and Roman philosophers, previously
 to

their works nor their names have come down to our times.

XX. Amidst these vicissitudes of fortune, the Christians applied themselves every where with an ardent and holy zeal to add to the strength and stability of their cause, and at the same time to improve it as much as possible by means of salutary laws and regulations. Over each of the larger churches, and such as were established in cities or towns of any note, there presided a teacher who bore the title of Bishop, and whose appointment to this office rested entirely with the people. The bishop was assisted by a council of presbyters or elders, who, in like manner, depended for their appointment on popular suffrage, and, availing himself of the aid thus furnished him, it was, in an especial

C E N T.
II.

Government
of the
church.

to this period, embraced Christianity, nor had the Christians applied themselves to the cultivation of philosophy; indeed it was a thing which they were expressly enjoined by St. Paul to avoid. From what we have here observed, it is easily to be perceived, by any one who will exert his reason, whether there be not an apparently good foundation for the conjecture which we have above hazarded, that the philosophers were in fact the authors of the sufferings to which the Christians were exposed in the time of the emperor Marcus. At this period the jealousy of the philosophers became awakened, and a fear was excited in their breasts lest they should be despoiled of their renown, and reduced, as it were, to beggary, in consequence of the disclosures made by those of their brethren who had turned Christians. Being therefore able to carry every point with the emperor, and Marcus himself no doubt feeling hurt and indignant at the contempt and derision with which philosophy, considered by him as the chief good, was treated by the Christians, they found no difficulty in prevailing on him to put these people without the pale of his justice, and to permit them, in return for the insults they had offered to the honour and dignity of philosophy, to be assailed with every species of cruelty, and even deprived of their lives.

degree,

C E N T.
II.Government
of the
church.

degree, his duty to be ever vigilant and active in preventing the interests of religion from experiencing any detriment. To the bishop likewise it belonged to allot to each of the presbyters his proper functions and department; and to see that, in every thing appertaining to religion and divine worship, a due respect was had to the laws and regulations which the people had enacted or otherwise sanctioned with their approbation. The deacons and deaconesses filled subordinate stations in the church, and had various duties assigned to them according as circumstances might require.

The daughter churches, or lesser Christian assemblies, that through the care and exertions of the bishop had been established in the neighbouring districts and villages, were governed by presbyters sent from the mother church, who, in consequence of their representing the person, and exercising, with a few exceptions, all the rights and functions of the bishop by whom they were commissioned, came to be distinguished by the title of *Chorepiscopi*, or rural bishops. The supreme power in these equal assemblies or congregations resided in the people; and consequently no alteration of importance, nor, in fact, any thing of more than ordinary moment, could be brought about or carried into effect without having recourse to a general assembly, by the suffrages and authority of which alone could the opinions and counsels of the bishop and the presbyters be rendered obligatory, and acquire the force of laws.

Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

XXI. The most perfect equality prevailed amongst all the churches in point of rights and power, each of them prescribing to it-
self

self at any time according to its own will and judgment such laws and regulations as its circumstances appeared to demand: nor does this age supply us with a single instance of any church assuming to itself any thing like a right of dominion or command over the others [y]. An ancient custom, however, obtained of attributing to those churches which had been founded by the apostles themselves a superior degree of honour and a more exalted dignity; on which account it was, for the most part, usual, when any dispute arose respecting principles or tenets, for the opinion of these churches to be asked; as also, for those who entered into a discussion of any matters connected with religion, to refer, in support of their positions, to the voice of the apostolic churches [z]. We may, therefore, hence very readily perceive the reason which, in

CENT.
II.
Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

[y] What was done by Victor during the controversy respecting the time of Easter by no means proves, as we shall presently shew, that he arrogated to himself the power of making laws.

[z] If the reader will turn to Irenæus *advers. Hæres.* lib. iii. cap. iii. p. 175. ed. Massuet. and Tertullian *de Præscript. advers. Hæreticos*, cap. xxxvi. p. 245. ed. Rigalt. he will find two very notable passages, in which these illustrious writers, in their dispute with the Gnostics, make their appeal to the apostolic churches. Between these passages there is such an accordance and similitude, that I can scarcely doubt but that Tertullian, at the time of his writing, had Irenæus, (whom he had certainly read, as appears from his book, *contra Valentinianos*, cap. v.) before his eyes, and intentionally imitated him. The Gnostics finding themselves hardly pressed by the authority of the sacred writings, endeavoured to maintain their ground by asserting that the true and genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ was not to be learnt from the writings of the apostles, for that it had never been committed to writing, but that the apostles had

C E N T. in cases of doubt and controversy, caused the
 II. Christians of the west to have recourse to the
 church

Authority of
 the apostolic
 churches.

had transmitted it merely by word of mouth. Their having recourse to such a miserable shift indicated plainly enough that their cause was wholly desperate: in fact, they could adduce nothing whatever, in support of this ridiculous assertion; and their opponents might therefore have contented themselves with calling upon them, as they certainly, with the greatest propriety might have done, to prove what they thus alleged. Tertullian and Irenæus, however, adopted a different mode of depriving them of this subterfuge, and exposing to the world its utter falsity, namely, that of appealing to the apostolic churches. Their train of argument is this:—If it were true that the apostles had orally transmitted a doctrine different from that which they committed to writing, there can be no doubt but that such doctrine would have been communicated to those churches which they themselves founded, ordained, and instructed. But it is notoriously the fact, that of all the churches which owe their foundation and institution to the apostles, and in which we know that it has been an object of main concern with their bishops most religiously to preserve and adhere to that form of discipline which they received from their founders, there is not a single one that gives the least countenance to the fables and idle dreams of the Gnostics. We maintain, therefore, that these latter are altogether unworthy of belief when they assert, that their tenets are of an apostolic origin, being derived from the apostles through oral communication. To this reasoning the Gnostics could reply in no other way than by saying, that the churches established by the apostles had gradually departed from the maxims and tenets of their founders, and that their primitive bishops had been forcibly supplanted by others who knew nothing of the genuine apostolical discipline. Foreseeing then, that such, if any, must be their answer, Irenæus takes care to shew that in the Roman church, which, for the sake of brevity, he takes as a fair example of the whole, the series of bishops had been continued down without interruption from the time of the apostles, and the regular succession of them been never disturbed or sullied by the intervention of any stranger or person whose principles were in any respect different from those of the apostles. From this one observation we gain considerable light as to this mode of arguing, and need no other proof
 of

church of Rome, those of Africa to that of Alexandria, and those of Asia to that of Antioch,

CENT.
II.

Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

of the very great error into which those of the present day fall who take their stand behind tradition and apostolical succession, and contend that they are justified in doing so by the example of the primitive Christian teachers. Both Irenæus and Tertullian most obviously agree in this, that they place all the apostolic churches on a precisely equal footing, and allow to each of them the same weight and authority in determining this controversy with the Gnostics. Tertullian is particularly explicit as to this. His words are ;—*Percurre ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsæ adhuc cathedræ apostolorum suis locis præsident. - - - Proxima est tibi Achaia ; habes Corinthum. Si non longe abes a Macedonia, habes Philippos, habes Theffalonicenses. Si potes in Asiam tendere, habes Ephesum. Si autem Italiæ adjaces, habes Romam, unde nobis quoque auctoritas præsto est.* Tertullian, it is manifest, makes no distinction between these apostolic churches : the same authority, and the same dignity is attributed by him to all of them : the church of Rome was, in his estimation, possessed of no greater consequence, nor had it any more power to determine the dispute with the Gnostics, than that of Ephesus, Theffalonica, or Corinth. The Roman church is indeed considered by him as having been more fortunate, inasmuch as it had been blessed with the presence of Peter, Paul, and John, who poured out their blood in the cause of Christ : *Ista quam felix ecclesia ! cui totam doctrinam apostoli cum sanguine suo profuderunt ; ubi Petrus passioni dominicæ adæquatur ; ubi Paulus Joannis exitu coronatur ; ubi apostolus Johannes posteaquam in oleum igneum demersus nihil passus est, in insulam relegatur.* But so far from giving countenance to the idea of a greater power with regard to determining controversies respecting religion being possessed by the church of Rome than by that of Ephesus or any other apostolical church, he in effect gives it a direct negative. Irenæus, indeed, extols the church of Rome, not only on account of its good fortune, but also for other reasons of which we shall presently take more notice ; but notwithstanding this, he plainly agrees with Tertullian as to the above point, that the power and authority of all the apostolic churches in determining the controversy that had arisen between the orthodox Christians and the Gnostics, was precisely equal. *Traditionem, says he, apostolorum in toto mundo manifestatam, in omni ecclesia adest respicere omnibus qui vera velint videre. — Etenim si recondita mysteria scissent*

C E N T.

II.

Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

tioch for their opinion, and which also occasioned these opinions to be, not unfrequently, re-

scissent apostoli, quæ seorsim et latenter ab reliquis perfectos docebant, his vel maxime traderent ea, quibus etiam ipsas ecclesias committebant. Most assuredly Irenæus would not have written thus, he would not have spoken generally of all the churches that had been founded by the apostles, but have confined his reference to that of Rome alone, if either he or any other person at that time had believed that the right and power of determining controversies respecting religion was possessed by the Roman church. It is true, indeed, that he afterwards makes no mention of the other churches, but contents himself with opposing to the Gnostics the sentiments of the church of Rome alone; but it is plain, that this is not done by him from a persuasion, that to this one church alone belonged the decision of Christian controversies, but, as he openly avows, for the sake of brevity; *sed quoniam valde longum est in hoc tali volumine omnium ecclesiarum enumerare successiones, maximæ et antiquissimæ ecclesiæ traditionem indicantes, confundimus omnes.* Tertullian and Irenæus agree also in this, that they pass over, without the slightest notice, that church, which it is natural to regard as the head and mother of all churches, and of which Christ himself was the parent and founder, I mean the church of Jerusalem. Tertullian, although he specifically enumerates the more celebrated of the apostolic churches, yet says not a word of that of Jerusalem. Irenæus may be considered as tacitly treating it with contempt, when he gives to the church of Rome a preference over all the others. But in this they are by no means singular, for I do not know that the church of Jerusalem, although in point of foundation superior to all the rest, is ever appealed to, or even cited, as an authority, by any of the ancient fathers. This circumstance however, can occasion no very great wonder to any one who is apprised, that the original and true church of Jerusalem, consisting of Jews and the descendants of Jews who had actually seen and heard our blessed Lord himself, seceded from the remaining church under the reign of Hadrian; and that the church which assembled in Hadrian's new city, Ælia Capitolina, and which assumed to itself the title of the Church of Jerusalem, was altogether a distinct assembly from the ancient and original congregation. In these respects, then, we see that Irenæus and Tertullian are in perfect harmony with each other; but in what further relates to the church of Rome we shall find them

regarded in the light of laws, namely, that these churches had been planted, reared up and

CENT.
II.
Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

considerably at variance. Irenæus extols it on many accounts, and attributes to it a certain superiority or pre-eminence; but Tertullian, although he had read, and in other respects follows Irenæus, speaks only of the felicity or good fortune of the Roman church; of its superiority in any other respect he appears to know nothing. The reason of this difference may, I think, be assigned without much difficulty. Irenæus had been at Rome, and he was without doubt, indebted for many kindnesses to the Roman bishop, Eleutherus; added to which he was the bishop of a poor little church which had suffered considerably in the then recent persecution under Marcus, and stood very much in need of the counsel and assistance that were to be afforded by the great and opulent church of Rome and its bishop. To speak in plain terms, he was no stranger to the advantages that were to be derived from the wealth and beneficence of the church of Rome, and he therefore made no scruple of flattering her pretensions as to a point on the accomplishment of which he knew that she was bent, namely, that of exalting herself to a superiority over the other Christian churches. But Tertullian was an African, and it is well known that the African church was, long after the times of which we are treating, impatient of the Roman domination, and a most strenuous asserter of the primitive Christian liberty. Therefore, although he was indebted for a considerable part of what is urged in argument by him against the Gnostics to Irenæus, as must be manifest to any one upon collation, he yet adopts none of the compliments that are paid by this latter writer to the Roman church; nor does he assign to it any pre-eminence over the other churches, except in that superior degree of felicity which it derived from the glorious death of the apostles Peter and Paul, and the miraculous preservation of the apostle John. But let us now see, since we have thus entered into the subject, in what consists that celebrated eulogium of Irenæus on the Roman church which Ren. Massuetus pronounces to be a grievous stumbling block to all who have quitted the church of Rome and shaken off the yoke of the catholic faith; which the friends of the papacy consider as the very citadel of that pre-eminence which the church of Rome arrogates to itself over every other church; and in explaining and commenting on which

CENT. and regulated either by the hand or under the
 II. im-

Authority of
 the apostolic
 churches.

so many great and excellent men have bestowed no little portion of labour. With the remarks of others on the subject, whether well or ill-founded, I shall not concern myself, but merely state, in as few words as possible, what, upon an impartial view of the matter, appears to me to be the truth. After stating that in his opposition to the Gnostics he should not adduce individually the authority and discipline of all the apostolical churches, but, for the sake of brevity, content himself with referring to the church of Rome, as exhibiting a fair example of the whole; Irenæus thus proceeds; *ad hanc enim ecclesiam* (the church of Rome) *propter potiorem principalitatem necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, hoc est, eos, qui sunt undique fideles, in qua semper ab his, qui sunt undique, conservata est ea, quæ est ab apostolis traditio.* These, then, are the words which have given rise to such subtle and laborious disquisitions. But let them be twisted in any manner whatever, I have not the least hesitation in declaring, it to be my decided opinion, that if the right which the church of Rome, at this day, asserts of dictating to the other Christian churches, be founded chiefly on this passage, it stands but on a very weak and tottering foundation indeed. But lest my judgment should appear to have been hastily formed, let it only be considered in a general way. (I.) That the sense in which the words of Irenæus are to be understood is altogether obscure, and that through either ignorance or want of skill in the Latin translator, it is impossible to comprehend, with any degree of precision, the meaning intended to be conveyed by certain terms, on the right understanding of which the intelligibility of the whole passage very materially depends. What, for instance, I would ask, are we to understand by *potior principalitas*? What meaning, again are we to annex to the expression *convenire ad ecclesiam Romanam*? In vain will it be for us to pretend to ascertain the sense of this passage until the original Greek of Irenæus be recovered. (II.) That Irenæus is speaking of the church of Rome in the second century, a period at which it might, no doubt, with justice be asserted that all its bishops and teachers had continued steadfast in the observance of that discipline which had been transmitted to them by the apostles Peter and Paul. To apply, therefore, what he then says, to the church of Rome in its present state, is to do much the same thing as if, in proof of the
 rights

immediate superintendance and care of some one or more of the apostles themselves.

XXII. Although

C E N T.
II.

Authority of
the apostolic
churches.

rights and power that belong to the emperors of Germany, who also bear the title of Roman emperors, we were to adduce the rights and powers that were exercised by the first emperors of the Augustan race, Octavius Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Without doubt, we should account it a very ingenious piece of pleasantry in any man to quote what Suetonius or Tacitus may have said respecting the authority of Augustus or Tiberius by way of shewing what is due from the German princes to their present emperor. By the same arguments, then, as a jurist would make use of in refuting such a man may an effectual answer be given to those who, from a passage in Irenæus, pretend to ascertain what are at present the rights and power of the Roman pontiff. (III.) That this is the testimony of a private individual, of one that was nothing more than the bishop of a small insignificant church that had been but a few years before established in Gaul, of a man moreover who in his writings has given, not a few proofs of a judgment far from sound or correct, as well as of a mind evidently labouring under the shackles of prejudice. But who is there, possessed of but merely common sense and information, that would recognise in the *dicta* or precepts of any private individual, and more especially in those of an individual who had betrayed no small deficiency of judgment, and been convicted of having fallen into more than one palpable error, a standard whereby to ascertain and demonstrate the public rights of states or churches? Should there, however, be found a man so disposed, we can meet Irenæus with an authority not at all inferior to himself either in point of judgment or of talents, namely Tertullian, who denies that the church of Rome possessed any pre-eminence over the rest of the churches, except it were in point of felicity or good fortune. What, therefore, the supporters of the church of Rome take upon them in this instance to maintain upon the authority of Irenæus, we shall assume to ourselves the liberty of denying upon the authority of Tertullian. Having, then, premised thus much in a general way, let us now direct our attention more particularly to the words of Irenæus. *Necesse est*, he tells us, *omnem ecclesiam convenire ad ecclesiam Romanam*; and for this he assigns two reasons; the first, *propter positionem principalitatem*; the second, *quia semper in ea conser-*

C E N T.

II.

Civil unity
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

XXII. Although, therefore, all the churches had, at the commencement of this century, various

vata est apostolorum traditio. Now it unluckily happens that the terms in which this precept is conveyed are such as to leave its meaning somewhat dubious. By the words *convenire ad ecclesiam Romanam*, it should seem most likely that we ought to understand *accedere ad Romanam ecclesiam*, or *consulere ecclesiam Romanam*, and that what Irenæus meant to say was this;—that it behoved all Christians, in matters of doubt, connected with religion, to resort for advice and direction to the church of Rome, (*i.e.* the church of Rome in its then state,) inasmuch as it was the most ancient and the largest of all the churches of the west, and owed its foundation to the hand of the apostles themselves. But if such be this father's meaning, and the reasons which he subjoins scarcely allow us to doubt of its being so, there is certainly nothing in it that can afford the church of Rome much support in the present day. It is not within the power, even of the most subtle disputant, to make it appear that Irenæus meant that his words should be applied to the church of Rome in all subsequent ages and times. On the contrary we have, in the latter reason which he assigns for his precept, a convincing proof that he spoke in relation only to the more ancient and early church of Rome as it existed in his own time. The reason that he assigns why the other churches should have recourse to that of Rome is, *quia in ea traditio apostolorum conservata est.* Now nothing can be more plain than that he here speaks merely of time past. Had he meant that the church of Rome was to be consulted and made the arbiters in all ages to come, he unquestionably would have written, *in qua traditio apostolorum conservata est, et semper conservabitur.* As to the first reason given by Irenæus, namely, *propter potiorem principalitatem*, it is altogether involved in obscurity and doubt. For *principalitas* is such an ambiguous word, and admits of being used in such a variety of senses, that, owing to the negligence of Irenæus, or his Latin translator, in not more particularly indicating what he meant by it, a degree of darkness, not easy to be dispelled, is thrown over the whole of this sentence. The conjecture that strikes me as the most plausible in regard to it is, that by the word *principalitas* Irenæus might mean those four honourable distinctions appertaining to the church of Rome which he had just before enumerated, namely, magnitude, antiquity, celebrity,

various laws and institutions in common, which had been received from the apostles themselves, and were particularly careful in maintaining with each other a certain community of tenets, morals, and charity; yet each individual church which had a bishop and presbyters of its own, assumed to itself the form and rights of a little distinct republic or commonwealth; and with regard to its internal concerns was wholly regulated by a code of laws, that, if they did not originate with, had, at least, received the sanction of the people constituting such church. This primitive liberty and independence, however, was by degrees relinquished, and it became the practice for all the minor churches within a province to form themselves into one large association, and to hold at stated seasons, much after the manner of confederate republics, a convention, in which the common interests and welfare of the whole were taken into

C E N T.
II.

Civil unity
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

lebrity, and apostolical origin. *Maximæ, says he, et antiquissimæ, et omnibus cognitæ, a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis, Petro et Paulo, fundatæ et constitutæ ecclesiæ.* In these, probably, consisted that *potior principalitas* which Irenæus attributes to the church of Rome; he never dreamt of ascertaining what would be its claims to pre-eminence in every future age. At least this explication of his words possesses a force and simplicity that I believe we shall in vain look for in any other. But it is time for me to put an end to this note, though materials are not wanting for extending it to a much greater length. I will therefore only add, that I cannot help viewing it as a thing particularly unbecoming in men of learning and talents, to pretend to say that the public rights of the universal church, and the form of government prescribed for it by Christ, are to be elicited from the obscure and uncertain words of a private individual, the bishop of merely a poor little insignificant church, a good and pious man unquestionably, but one, at the same time, whose mental qualifications and endowments were certainly nothing more than of the middling order.

C E N T.

II.

Civil unity
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

consideration and provided for. Of the immediate authors of this arrangement we are uninformed, but it is certain that it had its origin in Greece; and there are many things which combine to prove, that during this century it did not extend itself beyond the confines of Asia. In process of time, however, the very great advantages attending on a federation of this sort becoming apparent, other provinces were induced to follow the example of Greece, and by degrees this form of government became general throughout the whole church; so that the Christian community may be said, thenceforward, to have resembled one large commonwealth made up, like those of Holland and Switzerland, of many minor republics. These conventions or assemblies, in which the delegates from various associated churches consulted on what was requisite to be done for the common welfare of the whole, were termed *synods* by the Greeks, and by the Latins *councils*. To the laws enacted by these deputies under the powers with which they were invested by their respective churches, the Greeks gave the name of *canons* or general rules, and by this title it also became usual for them to be distinguished by the Latins [*a*].

XXIII. The

[*a*] The reader will find what I have here stated very forcibly illustrated and confirmed by Tertullian in a very notable passage that occurs in his book *de Jejuniiis*, cap. xiii. p. 711. opp. edit. Rigalt. Tertullian is advocating the cause of the Montanists, whose tenets he had espoused, and to whom the orthodox Christians attributed it as a fault that they had taken upon them to institute certain fasts or seasons of abstinence. The reason assigned by the regular Christians for objecting to the rules respecting fasts prescribed by the Montanists, was deduced from the nature of
divine

XXIII. The associations, however, thus introduced amongst the churches, and the councils

CENT.
II.

TO Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity.

divine worship. God, said they, ought to be honoured and worshipped by the Christians of their own free will, not from compulsion, or by the command of another. *Denique respondetis hæc ex arbitrio agenda, non ex imperio.* In this age, therefore, the nature and character of the true religion continued to be well understood by the generality of Christians, inasmuch as they denied it to be subject to the controul of any human laws. To this argument Tertullian replies, in the first place, that the Montanists, in observing certain fasts, did not conform themselves to the ordinances of men but to God, or the Paraclete, *i. e.* the Holy Spirit, who had enjoined those fasts by the mouths of his servants. *Plus humanæ licebit voluntati quam divinæ potestati? Ego me seculo, non Deo liberum memini; sic meum est ultro officium facere Domino, sicut indicere illius est.* He agrees, therefore, with the rest of the Christians that religion is not to be controuled by human laws, and strenuously advocates the cause of liberty: but at the same time he insists on it that obedience is to be paid to the commands of God, as delivered by certain of his servants. To this the Antimontanist Christians readily yielded their assent. The only thing, therefore, that remained in dispute between them and Tertullian was, whether Montanus and his followers were really, as they asserted, inspired by the Holy Spirit, or not? With regard to this he replies, in the second place, that amongst the Antimontanist Christians the bishops had the power of enjoining fasts, as also, in cases of great emergency, of imposing extraordinary contributions on the people. *Bene autem quod et episcopi universæ plebi mandare jejunia assolent: non dico de industria stipium conferendarum, ut vestra captura est: sed interdum et ex aliqua sollicitudinis ecclesiasticæ causa.* These words are of the very first importance and authority in enabling us to ascertain the extent to which the power possessed by the bishops of the primitive church reached. Had it been possible for the bishops of this period of their own accord, *i. e.* without the assent of the people, to do more than what is here stated, Tertullian would, most assuredly, not have failed to notice it on this occasion, when his attention was particularly directed to the rights and power which might lawfully be exercised by men over the flock of Christ. It appears, therefore, that with regard to two things

C E N T.

II.

Effects pro-
duced by the
introduction
of this civil
unity.

to which they gave rise, although not unattended with certain benefits and advantages, were, nevertheless

the bishop's sole mandate alone was sufficient. In the first place, he might enjoin fasts; for since every thing relating to the service of God was placed immediately under the care and direction of the bishop, and fasts were considered as constituting a part of such service, it was but just that the times for observing them should be left to his appointment. The bishop, it seems, could also, in any case of emergency, that called for pecuniary aid, and such cases were by no means uncommon, require of the people to make such an additional contribution, according to their means, as might enable him to meet such exigency. Concerning the bishop's power as to this, Tertullian speaks in his usual unpolished, obscure, and laconic manner; and it may, therefore, not be amiss to offer the reader some explanation of what he says on this head. It is manifest then, that under the title of *stipes* he refers to those contributions which the Christians were accustomed to make in consequence of an admonition from the bishop. These contributions he divides into ordinary and extraordinary. The words, *ut vestra capture est*, relate to those of the ordinary kind. *Captura* has here the meaning of *reditus* (income, ability, gains). The custom was for every Christian ordinarily to contribute towards the common stock in a certain degree, proportionate to his means or ability. In addition to these ordinary offerings, we find a distinct mention made of certain extraordinary ones, which were called for in cases of emergency. Extraordinary expences were not unfrequently incurred by churches in the entertainment of strangers, in relieving the sick, and those of the brethren who were languishing in captivity, and in various other ways, to the defrayment of which the free and voluntary oblations, as they were termed, of the Christians were occasionally found unequal. The exigencies here spoken of are in part particularized by Tertullian himself in *Apologet.* cap. xxxix. p. 325. *Dispensatur*, says he, *naufragiis, et si qui in metallis, et si qui in insulis, vel in custodiis duntaxat ex causa Dei seclæ alumni confessionis suæ fiunt.* Whenever a case of this nature occurred, the bishop addressed his flock, requiring every one to contribute, not only according to his means, but in a degree proportionate to the magnitude and pressure of the occasion, so that the necessity of the church might be fully answered;

theless, productive of so great an alteration in the general state of the church, as nearly to effect

C E N T.
II.

Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity.

and to this mandate it was customary for all to pay obedience with the utmost alacrity. The meaning, therefore, of Tertullian's words is this: "I will not speak of the very great readiness of the Christians in making the ordinary contributions required of them by the bishop; for I know that no one as to this acts from compulsion, but each person gives according to what his ability or circumstances permit. But, not unfrequently, unlooked-for accidents and emergencies occur, which demand pecuniary relief to a certain extent, and require that the ratio of contribution should be determined by the bishop: nor does any Christian, in such cases, ever hesitate in paying obedience to his commands." In the third place, Tertullian replies, that it was customary in Greece for councils of the churches to be convened, and that therein laws were enacted and duties imposed, to which, notwithstanding that they were purely of human origin, no exception was ever taken. *Aguntur præterea per Græcias illa certis in locis concilia ex universis ecclesiis, per quæ et altiora quæque in commune tractantur, et ipsa representatio totius nominis Christiani magna veneratione celebratur.* From these words it appears, (1st,) That at the close of the second century the practice of convening councils had not been adopted either in Africa, the country where Tertullian lived, or in the Latin Church, or in the East, or in Egypt, but solely in Greece, or, as Tertullian expresses it, *per Græcias, i. e.* the nations both in Europe and Asia that bore the name of Greeks. (2ndly,) That these councils were in his time regarded as of mere human origin, not as having been instituted either by Christ himself or his apostles. For what he had in view was to prove that good and pious men might enjoin fasts, and prescribe other salutary regulations to the church of Christ. Since, therefore, in support of his argument, he adduces the acts of these councils, it is plain that he must have considered them as assemblies which owed their origin to mere human authority, and their acts, not in the light of oracles or dictates of the Holy Spirit, as they came to be regarded in after times, but as mere human laws and regulations. (3dly,) That even in Tertullian's time, certain places or cities had been fixed on for the assembling of these Greek councils, and that no power existed of convening them elsewhere. (4thly,) That these councils did not busy themselves

CENT. effect the entire subversion of its ancient constitution. For, in the first place, the primitive rights

II.

Effects produced by the introduction of this civility.

themselves about things of inferior moment, each individual church being left to determine on such matters for itself, but employed themselves in the discussion and arrangement of points of a higher and weightier nature, or such as were of general interest and importance. (5thly.) That the bishops, who were present at these councils, were merely the representatives of their respective churches; that is, that they neither assented to, nor originated any thing therein in their private individual capacity, but always in the names of the churches of which they were respectively the delegates. *Representatio*, says Tertullian, *totius nominis Christiani celebratur*. Now *totum nomen Christianum* evidently, in this place, means, *tota ecclesia*, the whole church bearing the name of Christ. The bishops, therefore, were considered as representing, collectively, the entire associated Christian flock, and, individually, the different churches over which they respectively presided; and hence arose the veneration in which these councils were held. The opinion, that the bishops, assembled in council, officiated in the place of Christ himself, and that the very nature of their function constituted them both legislators and judges of the Christian community, had not at this time even suggested itself. Tertullian esteemed these councils worthy of the highest commendation, for he thus proceeds: *Et hoc quam dignum fide auspicante congregari undique ad Christum? Vide quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum*. He moreover adds, what is well worthy of remark, that the bishops were accustomed, before they commenced their deliberations, to petition for divine aid and assistance by prayer and fasting: *Conventus autem illi stationibus prius et jejunationibus operati, dolere cum dolentibus et ita demum congaudere gaudentibus norunt*. It appears, therefore, that ecclesiastical councils had their origin amongst the Greeks in the second century, and that their utility becoming manifest, they were gradually adopted by the church at large. The information thus afforded by Tertullian, with respect to the origin of councils, is supported by the general history of Christian affairs; for no notice whatever occurs of any ecclesiastical councils held prior to the second century; and with regard to those holden in the course of that age, the few memorials of them that have reached us very plainly indicate them to have been for the most part held

in

rights of the people, in consequence of this new arrangement of things, experienced a considerable diminution,

C E N T.
II.

Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity.

in Greece. Towards the close of this century the practice of holding councils of this kind passed from Greece into Palestine and Syria, as appears from Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiii. p. 190, 191, where mention is made of councils held about the end of the second century by the bishops of Palestine and the province of Osdroëna, respecting the controversies then in agitation concerning the proper time for celebrating Easter. By certain of the learned it is also contended, that on the same occasion a council of the Italian bishops was convened at Rome by the Roman pontiff Victor. Vid. Pet. Coustant. *Epist. Romanor. Pontificum*, tom. i. in Victore, § 4. p. 94. and others. In proof of this, they quote the following words of Eusebius: καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ Ρώμης δὲ ὁμοίως ἄλλη περὶ τῆ αὐτῆς ζήτηματος, Ἐπίσκοπον Βίκτορα δηλώσα, which are thus rendered by Valesius, *alia item extat epistola synodi Romanæ, cui Victoris episcopi nomen presertum est.* But not to rest upon the circumstance, that no mention is made of any Roman *synod* in the Greek original, the name of Victor, bishop of Rome, being the only one prefixed to this epistle, puts it out of all question that it was not the letter of any *synod*, but merely of Victor himself; for synodical epistles were uniformly subscribed by all the bishops present. The only construction, therefore, of which these words of Eusebius seem properly to admit, is this; that Victor having, as was then the customary practice, consulted with the Roman presbyters, addressed, with their consent, this letter, in his own name, to the church over which he presided; which thing of itself furnishes us with an argument, that the practice of many churches assembling together in council, had not at that time passed from Greece into Italy. And perhaps it may not be amiss to notice it by the bye, that Valesius has fallen into some other mistakes with regard to the account given by Eusebius of the controversy respecting Easter, in consequence of his estimating the state of the church in the second century from its condition in after ages. But I have not yet pointed out all that is deserving of notice with regard to this passage of Tertullian. Amongst other things, it is particularly worthy of remark, that he speaks therein of councils as having had their origin in Greece. Indeed, in no province could it have been more natural for this practice of holding councils to have arisen than in Greece.

C E N T.
II.Effects pro-
duced by the
introduction
of this civil
unity.

diminution, inasmuch as, thenceforward, none but affairs of comparatively very trifling consequence

Greece. Under a monarchical government, such as that of emperors and kings, the idea of holding councils would probably never have entered into the minds of the Christians; but in such a province as Greece was, the notion might readily enough suggest itself. The Greeks were, as we all know, divided into many minor states and republics. Amongst these petty governments an intimate association for general purposes subsisted; and for many ages prior to the coming of Christ it had been usual for them to hold very frequent councils, and to assemble, by their delegates or representatives, at certain places, in order to deliberate and resolve on what might best promote their common interests. The most celebrated of these assemblies was their general national council, or that of the Amphictyons, which was held at Delphi at stated seasons of the year, in spring and autumn, and to which were referred all controverted matters of any considerable weight or moment that might have arisen between any of the confederated states. Vid. *Ubbonis Emmii Græcia vetus*, tom. iii. p. 340, et seq. *Nouveau Dictionnaire Hist. Crit.* par Chaufepied, tom. i. voce *Amphictyones*. These councils were not altogether discontinued even after Greece had been reduced into a province by the Romans. The great council of the Amphictyons, in particular, continued, with the consent of the emperors, to hold its meetings, even down to the time when Tertullian wrote, as may be seen in Pausanias. In a province so much accustomed to councils, it is no wonder that the Christians should hit upon the thought, that it might redound to the welfare of the church if, after the example of the Greek states, and particularly of the Amphictyons, assemblies or councils of associated Christians were to meet at certain stated seasons, and deliberate respecting their common interests. Light is hence thrown on canon xxxth of those bearing the title "Apostolical," and which are commonly attributed to Clement of Rome, as well as on the fifth of the Nicene ones, by both of which the bishops are enjoined to assemble in council twice in the year, namely, in the spring and fall. These were the identical times at which, as we have above stated, it was usual, even so low down as the second century, for the Amphictyons to hold their meetings; and hence I think it is evident, that it was the peculiar constitution and habits

of

quence were ever made the subject of popular deliberation and adjustment; the councils of the associated churches assuming to themselves the right of discussing and regulating every thing of moment or importance, as well as of determining all questions to which any sort of weight was attached. Whence arose two sorts of ecclesiastical law, the one public or general, and thenceforward termed "Canonical," from the canons; the other private or peculiar, consisting merely of such regulations as each individual church deemed it expedient, after the ancient manner, to enact for itself. In the next place, the dignity and authority of the bishops were very materially augmented and enlarged. In the infancy, indeed, of councils, the bishops did not scruple to acknowledge that they appeared there merely as the ministers or legates of their respective churches, and that they were, in fact, nothing more than representatives acting from instructions: but it was not long before this humble language began, by little and little, to be exchanged for a loftier tone; and they at length took upon them to assert that they were the legitimate successors of the apostles themselves, and might consequently, of their own proper authority, dictate laws to the Christian flock. To what an extent the inconveniences and evils arising out of these preposterous pretensions

C E N T.
II.

Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity.

of their country which led the Greek Christians to think of establishing ecclesiastical councils; and that, in constituting assemblies of this kind, they merely availed themselves, in the cause of religion, of a measure that had long been considered as productive of very essential advantages in the state. With regard to the different points thus touched upon, I can perceive a very wide field for discussion lying open before me; but on the present occasion I am compelled to be studious of brevity.

reached

C E N T.

II.

Effects produced by the introduction of this civility.

reached in after times, is too well known to require any particular notice in this place. Another effect which these councils had, was to break in upon and gradually destroy that absolute and perfect equality which had reigned amongst the bishops in the primitive times. For as it was necessary that some certain place should be fixed on for the seat of council, and that the right of convening the assembly and presiding therein as moderator, as well as of collecting the suffrages, and preserving the records of its acts, should be vested in some one or other of its members, it for the most part became customary to give a preference in these respects to the chief city of the province and its bishop, and hence, in process of time, sprung up the dignity and authority of "metropolitans," a title conferred by way of distinction on the bishops of principal cities. These associations of churches, situated within one and the same province, soon gave rise to the practice of many different provinces associating together; and hence a still greater disparity, by degrees, introduced itself amongst the bishops. In fine, this custom of holding councils becoming at length universally prevalent, the major part of the church [b] assumed the form of a large civil commonwealth, made up of numerous inferior

[b] I purposely express myself after this manner, since it can be made appear, from unquestionable authority, that in every part of the then known world there were certain churches, and those too of considerable magnitude and consequence, (for instance, the African church properly so called, in Africa, the Chaldaic and Persian in Asia, and that of Britain in Europe, to pass over others that might be mentioned), which, although they adopted the practice of holding councils, and did not keep themselves entirely aloof

ferior republics; to the preservation of which order of things it being found expedient that a chief or superintending prelate should be appointed for each of the three grand divisions of the earth; and that, in addition to this, a supreme power should be lodged in the hands of some one individual bishop; it was tacitly assented to [c] that a certain degree of ecclesiastical pre-eminence should be recognised as belonging to the bishops of Antioch, Rome, and Alexandria, the principal cities in Asia, Europe, and Africa, and that the bishop of Rome, the noblest and most opulent city in the world, should moreover take the prece-

C E N T.
II.
Effects produced by the introduction of this civil unity.

aloof from all association, yet declined to make a part of that grand Christian confederation which was gradually entered into by the rest; and were, for a long time, inflexibly tenacious of their own just liberty and independence. The churches which thus tacitly declined joining the general association, and maintained no other community with those principal prelates who were styled patriarchs, than that of religion and charity, of themselves furnish us with an effectual argument in refutation of those who ascribe the origin of this association to our blessed Lord himself, and make it to have sprung from some law of his. For had it been the command of our Saviour that his church should take the form of a large commonwealth, most assuredly no Christian assembly would have lain claim to independence, and refused to acknowledge the authority of those who were appointed to preside over the general interests of the whole body.

[c] The council of Nice, the principal one of those that are termed Œcumenical, by its sixth canon, which treats of the pre-eminence of the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, places it out of all question that the dignity and authority of these prelates rested, not on divine right, nor on any thing in the nature of an apostolic mandate, but solely and entirely on ancient usage or tacit consent. Its commencement in Latin is, *Antiqua consuetudo servetur*, in Greek τὰ ἀρχαῖα ἐν κρατίστο. Vid. Lud. Ell. du Pin. *de Antiqua Ecclesie Disciplina*, p. 19, 20.

dence

C E N T.
H.Comparison
of the Chris-
tian with the
Jewish
priesthood.

dence amongst these principal bishops, or, as they were afterwards styled, *patriarchs*, and also assume the primacy of the whole Christian church throughout the world [*d*].

XXIV. By whatever advantages this new form of ecclesiastical government might be attended, they were confined exclusively to pastors of the higher order, *i. e.* the bishops who sat in these councils as the representatives of their respective churches: but much about the same time there arose and quickly gained ground in the Christian world, an opinion respecting the nature of the functions wherewith the ministers of the church were invested, which tended, in no small degree, to augment the dignity and rights of the whole sacred body. Whilst the least probability remained that Jerusalem might,

[*d*] The extent of the authority and power possessed in the primitive ages by these bishops, who were thus invested with the presidency of the larger ecclesiastical confederations, may, without much difficulty, be estimated when it is considered that they were raised, by tacit consent, above their brethren, merely upon the principle of supplying some external link or bond whereby the minor associations, or churches, which were all independent of each other, might be held together. What the different metropolitans were in respect of their provinces, that was a patriarch in respect of a larger portion of the world. That great thing, therefore, which we term the Hierarchy, and which has, most unhappily, been the cause of so many disputes and wars amongst Christians, if it be examined into with impartiality, and traced back to the first ages of the church, will be found to have taken its rise from very small and inconsiderable beginnings, in fact to have originally sprung from nothing more than the plan adopted by the Greek churches of moulding their ecclesiastical establishment after the model of their national civil government and councils, and that it was only by degrees that it attained to that degree of consequence and stability which has enabled it in subsequent ages to bid defiance to all the efforts of power and art to overthrow it.

at

at one time or other, again rear its head from the dust, the Christian teachers and elders assumed to themselves no titles or distinctions, at least none but the most modest and humble ones [e]; but when the fate of that once glorious city had been finally sealed by Hadrian, and not the most distant hope could any longer be entertained by the Jews of seeing their ancient government re-established, these same pastors and ministers, for the most part, conceived a wish to have it believed by their flocks that they themselves had succeeded to the rights of the Jewish priesthood. The bishops, therefore, made it their business thenceforward to inculcate the notion that they were invested with a character resembling that of the great high priest of the Jews, and were consequently possessed of all those rights which had been recognised as belonging to the Jewish pontiff. The functions of the ordinary Jewish priests were, in like manner, stated to have devolved, though under a more perfect form, on the presbyters of the Christian church: and finally, the deacons were placed on a parallel with the Levites or inferior ministers of the temple. Whether the comparison thus instituted between functions altogether opposite in their nature, had its origin in art and design, or was rather the offspring of ignorance and imprudence, is a thing not now to be ascertained; of this, however, there can be no doubt, that having once been approved of and

C E N T.
II.Comparison
of the Christian
with the
Jewish
priesthood.

[e] Ignatius, in the commencement of his epistles, styles himself θεόφορον, *deiferum*, a title assumed by him, as it should seem, in common with other bishops of his time, and importing a man commissioned to make known to the world the will and commands of the Deity.

admitted

C E N T.
II.Comparison
of the Christian
with the
Jewish
priesthood.

admitted to be just, it not only gave rise to a variety of errors, and introduced a greater distinction between teachers and learners than seems consonant to the spirit of the Christian discipline, but also very materially added to the rights and emoluments of the ministers and dispensers of Christ's word [f].

[f] This comparison of the Jewish with the Christian sacred order, amongst other things, unquestionably gave rise to the claim of tythes and first fruits, which is certainly of higher antiquity than the time of Constantine the Great. And it seems not at all unlikely that a desire of augmenting their income, which was but slender and uncertain, might have first suggested to certain of the bishops this plan of investing the ministers of the gospel with the rights of the Jewish priesthood. That the offering of the first fruits had already, in the age of which we are treating, come to be regarded as a matter of divine right, is placed, as it were, beyond all doubt by Irenæus, who, in his work *contra Hæreses*, lib. iv. cap. xxxii. § 5. p. 249. represents it as having been inculcated by Christ himself in the celebration of the last supper. *Christus suis discipulis dans consilium primitias Deo offerre ex suis creaturis, non quasi indigenti, sed ut ipsi nec infructuosi nec ingrati sint, eum qui ex creatura panis est, accepit et gratias egit, dicens, Hoc est meum corpus, &c.* And in cap. xxxiv. p. 250. we are told by him, *offerre igitur oportet Deo primitias ejus creature, sicut et Moses ait, non apparebis vacuus, &c.* From which passages it is manifest that the Christian teachers had already conceived the plan of bettering their condition by calling in the authority of the Mosaic law. That tithes had not, at this time, been established, at least in the Latin church, is, I think, equally to be proved from Irenæus, who, in cap. xxxiv. p. 250. says, *Et propter hoc illi quidem (the Jewish priests) decimas suorum habebant consecratas: qui autem perceperunt libertatem (i. e. the Christians) omnia que sunt ipsorum ad dominicos decernunt usus, hilariter et libere dantes.* It is certain, however, that in the Greek and oriental churches they began to be adopted sooner than in the Latin ones, and were rendered, I am led to think, even so early as this century, inasmuch as mention is made of them by the Greek writers of the third century, and also in the apostolical constitutions, as of a thing well known and established.

XXV. The

XXV. The external change thus wrought in the constitution of the church would have been, however, far less detrimental to the interests of Christianity, had it not been accompanied by others of an internal nature, which struck at the very vitals of religion, and tended, in no small degree, to affect the credit of those sacred writings on which the entire system of Christian discipline relies for support. Of these the most considerable and important are to be attributed to a taste for the cultivation of philosophy and human learning, which, during the preceding century, if not altogether treated with neglect and contempt by the Christians, had at least been wisely kept under, and by no means permitted to blend itself with religion; but in the age of which we are now treating burst forth on a sudden into a flame, and spread itself with the utmost rapidity throughout a considerable part of the church. This may be accounted for in some measure from its having been the practice of the many Greek philosophers, who in the course of this century were induced to embrace Christianity, not only to retain their pristine denomination, garb, and mode of living, but also to persist in recommending the study of philosophy, and initiating youth therein. In proof of this we may from amidst numerous other examples adduce in particular that of Justin the celebrated philosopher and martyr [g]. The immediate nursery and very cradle, as it were, of Christian philosophy must however be

[g] That Justin Martyr continued to wear the philosopher's mantle subsequently to his embracing Christianity is evident from the exordium to his dialogue with Trypho,
VOL. II. 1 since

C E N T.
II.

A taste for
philosophy
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

be placed in the celebrated feminary which long flourished at Alexandria under the denomination of the Catechetical school. For the persons who presided therein in the course of the age of which we are treating, namely, Pantænus, Athenagoras, and Clement of Alexandria, not only engaged with ardour in the cultivation of philosophy themselves, but also exerted their influence in persuading those whom they were educating for the office of teachers in the church, to follow their example in this respect, and make it their practice to associate philosophical principles with those of religion [b]. It is to be observed

since Trypho is there made to say that he conceived him to be a philosopher from his garb. Origen, in a letter preserved by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xix. states that Heraclas, who was afterwards bishop of Alexandria, was accustomed, previously to his studying philosophy, to appear clothed after the common fashion, κοινῇ ἰσθήτι; but that upon his placing himself under the tuition of Ammonius, he assumed the philosopher's mantle and continued ever after to wear it; even notwithstanding his being received into the order of presbyters. Ἀποδυσάμενος καὶ φιλόσοφον ἀναλαβὼν σχῆμα μέχρι τῆς δεῦρο τηρεῖ. Vid. Origen. *Opp.* tom. i. p. 2. edit. Benedict. Jerome in his *Catal. Script. Eccles.* cap. xx. p. 86. edit. Fabric. speaking of the Christian philosopher Aristides, says, *Aristides Atheniensis, philosophus eloquentissimus et sub pristino habitu discipulus Christi.* There can surely be no necessity for my adducing more instances than these. A splendid encomium on philosophy from the pen of Justin Martyr occurs at p. 5, 6. of his dialogue *cum Tryphone*, where he pronounces it to be “the chief good,” μέγιστον κτήμα, “a thing most acceptable in the sight of God, and the only sure guide to a state of perfect felicity.” A more ancient encomiast of philosophy is not, I believe, to be pointed out amongst the Christian writers. He defines philosophy, p. 12, to be επιστήμη τῆ ὄντος καὶ τῆ ἀληθείας ἐπίγνωσις. “the science of being,” (that is, of those things which are real and immutable,) “and the knowledge of truth.” The end or object of philosophy he pronounces to be εὐδαιμονίαν, “felicity.”

[b] Pantænus was, without doubt, the first of the Egyptian

observed however, that what was termed by these philosophy, was not the discipline of any

O E N T.
II.

par-

A taste for philosophy introduced amongst the Christians.

Egyptian Christians that engaged in the study of philosophy: for Origen, in that epistle of his preserved by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xix. p. 221. wherein he replies to those who had imputed a love of letters and philosophy to him as a fault, defends himself under the cover of only two examples, the one ancient, the other of recent date: the former is that of Pantænus, the latter of Heraclas, whom he represents as having been one of his fellow-students in the School of Ammonius. Had any one amongst the Christians of Egypt engaged in the cultivation of philosophy before Pantænus, there can be no doubt but that Origen, whom nothing whatever that had taken place in antecedent times amongst the Egyptian Christians appears to have escaped, would, by way of more readily vindicating himself, have brought forward earlier instances of an attachment to philosophy than even that of Pantænus.—That I should say any thing of Athenagoras appears to me altogether unnecessary, as there is extant, in addition to the apology written by him in defence of the Christians, a tract of his concerning the resurrection of the dead, which is replete with evidence of the great extent to which he engaged in the cultivation of philosophy. Clement, the third president of the school of Alexandria in succession from Pantænus, and whom, by way of distinction, we usually style *the Alexandrian*, has left behind him, in various things which he published, abundant proof of his partiality for philosophy, such a partiality, indeed, as appears to have exceeded all ordinary limits. Jos. Aug. Orsi, in the *Ecclesiastical History* written by him in Italian, tom. ii. p. 406. considers this Clement as the first of the Christian writers that espoused the cause of philosophy. But he is deceived; Justin Martyr, as we have already seen, had previously stood forth as its advocate and eulogist, and undoubtedly Pantænus in his day had done the same. There can be no question, however, but that Clement is to be ranked amongst the first and principal Christian defenders and teachers of philosophic science, indeed that he may even be placed at the head of those who devoted themselves to the cultivation of philosophy with an ardour that knew no bounds, and were so blind and misguided as to engage in the hopeless attempt of producing an accommodation between the principles of philosophic science

C E N T.
II.A taste for
philosophy
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

particular sect, but a selection of such principles and maxims from all the different philosophic

and those of the Christian religion. He himself expressly tells us in his *Stromata*, lib. i. cap. i. p. 326. opp. that he would not hand down Christian truth pure and unmixed, but ἀναμειγμέτην τοῖς φιλοσοφίας δόγμασι, μαλλον δὲ ἐγκέκαλυμμένην καὶ ἐπι-κεκρυμμένην, “associated with, or rather veiled by and shrouded under the precepts of philosophy.” For, according to him, the rudiments or seeds of celestial wisdom communicated by Christ to the world, lay hid in the philosophy of the Greeks, after the same manner as the esculent part of a nut lies concealed within a shell. And on this ground we find him, in the same book, cap. iv. p. 331. entertaining a belief that Solomon, in *Prov.* ii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, meant to inculcate the study of philosophy, and attributing to the cultivation of philosophy a certain efficacy in rendering men just and upright, τοῖς ὑπὸ φιλοσοφίας δεικταιωμένοις βοήθεια θησαυρίζεται. He had before said, at p. 319, that the souls of men were fed or nourished κατὰ τὴν ἑλληνικὴν φιλοσοφίαν, “by the philosophy of the Greeks,” and added the above-noticed comparison of this species of philosophy with a nut, to which he frequently has recourse, by way of expressing his opinion of the nature and value of human wisdom. For he appears to have been firmly persuaded that the essence of the Greek philosophy was sound, wholesome, and salutary, in fact, that it was perfectly consonant to the spirit of Christian wisdom, but that it was compassed about and veiled from immediate observation by a cloud of superstition and idle fictions, just in the same way as the kernel of a nut is concealed by the shell, and that we should therefore make it our business industriously to penetrate this exterior covering, so as to discover the true relationship between human and divine wisdom. *Stromat.* lib. vii. p. 832. cap. ii. The origin of the Greek philosophy he, without scruple, attributes to the Deity himself, whom however, in the communication of it to the world, he conceives to have availed himself of the instrumentality of inferior agents, ἕτος ἐστὶν ὁ διδῶς καὶ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν διὰ τῶν ὑποδείξεων ἀγγέλων. *Hic (the Deity) est, qui dat Græcis philosophiam per inferiores angelos.* To the Christian religion he assigns a superiority over philosophy, inasmuch as the Lord reserved the promulgation of it for himself: ἀλλ’ ἢ μείζων Κυρίου ἢ δόξα τῶν πισυόντων, *at opinio credentium (the religion professed by the Christians) pars est Domini (was communicated by the Lord himself).* In explaining and illustrating

sophic systems as appeared to be most con- C E N T.
 fentaneous to right reason, and admitted of be- II.
 ing

A taste for
 philosophy
 introduced
 amongst the
 Christians.

illustrating his opinion on this head, he is led to intimate his perfect conviction as to a point on which we find him pretty plainly expressing his sentiments in other places, and in which Justin Martyr coincides with him; namely, that before Christ's advent, philosophy was the way to eternal life, and that therefore no doubt can be entertained of the Grecian sages having obtained salvation. In his *Stromat.* lib. i. cap. vii. p. 337. lib. vi. cap. viii. p. 773. he says, that philosophy was divinely communicated to the Greeks as a special testament or covenant, and that it in fact constitutes the basis of that doctrine which the world has since received from Christ: τὴν δὲ φιλοσοφίαν καὶ μᾶλλον Ἑλλήσιν ὄντων διαθήκην δικαίαν αὐτοῖς δεδόσθαι, ὑπόσχεσθαι ἕσαν τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφίας. In saying this, however, he means it to be understood that the prince of darkness, whom he terms the inveterate cultivator of tares, had plentifully disseminated his noxious weeds in the philosophy of Greece as well as in that of the barbarous nations. In the same book vi. *Stromat.* cap. xvii. p. 822. & seq. he urges many things in favour of the dignity and excellence of philosophy, amongst which the following passage is particularly worthy of remark: Ἐικότως ἂν Ἰουδαίους μὲν νόμος, Ἑλλήσι δὲ φιλοσοφία μέχρι τῆς παρεμβίας. ἐπειθεὶν δὲ ἡ κλήσις ἡ καθολικὴ εἰς περιέσιον δικαιοσύνης λαὸν κατὰ τὴν ἐκ πίστεως διδασκαλίαν: *merito ergo Judæis quidem lex, Græcis autem data est philosophia usque ad adventum (of Christ): ex eo autem tempore universalis est vocatio ad peculiarem populum justitiæ per eam quæ est ex fide doctrinam (the Christian religion).* The sense, then, entertained by Clement of philosophy is very clearly to be perceived. Previously to the coming of Christ, philosophy had, according to his opinion, been the same thing to the Greeks that the law of Moses was to the Hebrews. Both of them were originally derived from God, who, however, in the communication of them to mortals, availed himself of the ministrations of angels. Both of them pointed out the road to salvation; the former to the Greeks, the latter to the Jews. Neither the one nor the other system of discipline could pretend to absolute perfection, nor did either of them preserve itself free from the adulteration of human opinions. In process of time, therefore, it pleased the Deity to impart to the whole human race a more perfect wisdom through Jesus Christ. Neither the law of the Jews, nor the philosophy of the Greeks, however, is to be considered

CENT.
II.A taste for
philosophy
introduced
amongst the
Christians.

ing so tempered and modified as to reconcile them, in a certain degree, with Christian notions and tenets [i].

XXVI. The

dered as thereby abolished, but as in part perfected, and in part disencumbered of various faulty particulars, the offspring of mere human refinement and conceit. To any one entertaining an opinion like this, it must of necessity appear that the leading principles of Christianity are so to be understood and interpreted as to make them accord with the maxims and precepts of the best and wisest of the Grecian sages. It will readily then, I think, be granted by every one who shall duly consider the constancy with which the precepts of the school of Alexandria, from the time of Pantænus, persisted in recommending and inculcating the study of philosophy, that to this school and its masters is chiefly to be ascribed that love of philosophic speculation to which the primitive Christians were evidently strangers, but which towards the close of this century began to diffuse itself gradually throughout the whole church, and insensibly to supplant that holy simplicity which characterised Christianity during the first age. For further information respecting this celebrated school at Alexandria, which, whether it was productive of most benefit or detriment to the Christian cause, would, I believe, be found hard to determine, the reader may consult the *Antiquitates Academicae* of Herm. Conringius, p. 29. ; a particular dissertation on the subject by And. Schmidius, prefixed by Andr. Hyperius to his book *de Catechesi*; a work written in Italian, by Aulifius, *Delle Scuole Sacre*, lib. ii. cap. i. ii. p. 5—17. and cap. xxi. p. 92; *The History of Catechisms*, in German, by Lange-mackius, P. I. p. 86. 122. & seq. as well as other works.

[i] Clement of Alexandria, who certainly holds the first place amongst the patrons of philosophy, supplies us with this definition of it; (*Stromat.* lib. i. cap. vii. p. 338. edit. Potterian.) Φιλοσοφίαν δὲ ἐστὶν τὴν Στωικὴν λέγω, ἔδδὲ τὴν Πλατωνικὴν, ἢ τὴν Ἐπικουρείον τε, καὶ Ἀριστοτελικὴν, ἀλλ' ὅσα ἐζηταί παρ' ἐκάστη τῶν αἰρέσεων τῶν καλῶς, δικαιοσύνην μετὰ εὐσεβῆς ἐπισήμης ἐκδιδάσκοντα τῶτο συμπᾶν τὸ ἐκλεκτικὸν Φιλοσοφίαν φημί· ὅσα δὲ ἀνθρώπων λογισμῶν ἀποτεμόμενοι παρεχάραξαν, ταῦτα ἢ ἂν ποτε δεῖα ἔποιμ' ἄν. *Philosophiam autem dico non Stoicam, nec Platoniam, aut Epicuream et Aristotelicam, sed quæcumque ab his sedis recte didita sunt, quæ docent justitiam cum pia scientia, hoc totum seledum dico philosophiam: cetera autem quæ ex humanis rationationibus præfeda adulteraverunt, ea nunquam divina dixerim.*

XXVI. The rise, however, of this taste for philosophical speculation, and the ascendancy which they perceived it gradually acquiring in the minds of so many of their teachers, became a source of the most poignant regret to all such as continued steadfastly attached to that ancient and simple species of piety which had been delivered down by the Apostles and their disciples; inasmuch as they saw reason to fear that the cause of celestial truth might be thereby materially injured, as in reality proved to be the case, and that divine wisdom would not long retain either its proper value or dignity in the estimation of mankind. In consequence of this the Christian church became divided in-

C E N T.
II.

Contentions
amongst the
Christians
with regard
to philoso-
phy.

erim. Now all this, without question, appears to be well and wisely said, and perfectly accords with what is laid down respecting the nature of philosophy by Justin Martyr, in his *Dial. cum Tryphone*, p. 6. & seq. But the truth is, that every one who will be at the pains to turn over the writings of Clement himself as well as those of his very celebrated disciple Origen, and of Justin, must very readily perceive that many things were regarded by them as perfectly consentaneous to right reason and the spirit of Christianity which are, in fact, not to be reconciled with either. Notwithstanding all the desire which these good men evince to persuade us that they entertained a partiality for no particular sect, they were certainly attached to the Eclectics, a sect that flourished formerly in Egypt, and considered every thing as indisputable which had received the sanction of that sect. Of this not a doubt can remain with any one who will take the trouble to compare Clement and Origen with Philo Judæus, one equally a disciple of the Eclectic school. This sect of the Eclectics, of which a particular account is given by Ja. Brucker in his *Historia Philosophiæ critica*, although it culled something from every sect, was yet wont to give the preference or chief authority in every thing relating to the Deity, the human race, and this nether world, to Plato, than whom, it was supposed, none had retained more of the original and genuine philosophy of human nature.

C E N T.
II.Contentions
amongst the
Christians
with regard
to philoso-
phy.

to two parties which opposed each other with the utmost warmth; the one regarding every species of human learning, and more particularly philosophy, with detestation and contempt, and enjoining the brethren to maintain the faith in all its genuine simplicity; the other contending for the utility and excellence of philosophic disquisition, and encouraging the teachers of the church to occupy themselves in demonstrating the accordance of religion with the principles of right reason [k]. The issue of this dispute, which lasted for a considerable

[k] Respecting this contention between the adversaries and friends of philosophy, abundant testimonies are to be adduced both of this and the succeeding century. Amongst those of the age now under review, there is extant in Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxviii. p. 197. a remarkable passage of an unknown author who had written a book in opposition to the errors of Artemon, and who inveighs severely against the Artemonites for neglecting the study of the Holy Scriptures, and devoting themselves to the cultivation of philosophy and the Aristotelian logic, endeavouring to find support for their errors respecting Christ in the arts and discipline of unbelievers, *artibus ac disciplinis infidelium*, (so Valefius translates the words τὰς τῶν ἀπίστων τέχναις), and finally studying to obscure and deprave the simple religion of the New Testament by encumbering it with the subtle refinements of vain and impious men, τῇ τῶν ἀθέων πανουργίᾳ (that is, as we may gather from what he before says, the rules and precepts of the Aristotelian logic). In this passage, there are two things that present themselves as chiefly deserving of remark. The first is, that the men who are therein reprehended, were accustomed to scrutinize such passages of scripture as were urged against them, by the very nicest logical test: a practice which this writer hesitates not to pronounce impious and intolerable. Καὶ αὐτοῖς προεῖν τις ῥητὸν γραφῆς θεικῆς, ἐξετάξαι πότερον συνημμένον ἢ διεξευγμένον δύναται ποιῆσαι σχῆμα συλλογισμῶ. *Quod si quis aliquem divinæ scripturæ locum eis objecerit, examinant, utrum connexum an disjunctum syllogismi genus ex eo confici possit.* The other thing that particularly offers itself to

derable while, at length was, that victory declared itself in favour of the patrons of philosophy,

CENT.
II.

Contentions
amongst the
Christians
with regard
to philoso-
phy.

observation in the passage we allude to is, that the class of men whose opinions and practices it combats were much devoted to the study of geometry, and applied to Christian theology that mode of teaching and demonstrating which is peculiar to geometers: καταλίποντες δὲ τὰς ἀγίας τῆ θεῶ γραφάς, γεωμετρίαν ἐπιτηδεύουσιν, ὡς ἂν ἐκ τῆς γῆς ὄντες καὶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς λαλῶντες. *Relictis atque abjectis sacris Dei scripturis, geometria student, quippe qui terrestres sint et loquantur terrena.* — Εὐκλείδης γὰρ παρὰ τίσιν αὐτῶν φιλοπόνως γεωμετρεῖται. *Euclidis igitur geometria apud nonnullos eorum studiose excolitur.*

There is, therefore, nothing done at present for which a precedent is not to be found in former times. When we find the culture of philosophy, of logic, and geometry placed by this man amongst the crimes of heretics, it is pretty plain in what degree of repute these studies were held by the generality of Christians in those days. Many very distinct vestiges of this dispute respecting the value of philosophy and its use in theology, are to be met with in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, who, moreover, sometimes takes occasion to censure with sufficient acrimony those who portended great detriment to the cause of Christianity from the introduction of philosophy into the church, and called upon all the sincere professors of Christianity to revert to the ancient simplicity of the apostles. To those who read him, it will be obvious that the things which are agitated with so much eagerness in the present day, engrossed equally the attention of former ages, and that the contention between faith and reason, by which the world has been disturbed so greatly of late, is by no means a matter of recent origin. In the very outset of the work to which he gives the title of *Stromata*, we find him undertaking the defence of philosophy. The opponents of philosophy he, in lib. i. cap. i. p. 326. divides into two classes: the first consisting of the more moderate ones, or those who contended merely that philosophy was of no use. "I am no stranger," says he, "to what is urged by some, whose ignorance leads them to see danger in every thing, namely, that our attention ought to be exclusively directed to things of the first necessity, and on which we may build our faith, and not be suffered to occupy itself in foreign and fruitless studies, such as busy and detain the mind without conducting it to any certain end." The other class was composed

C E N T.
II.Contentions
amongst the
Christians
with regard
to philoso-
phy.

lofophy, and that thofe teachers came to be
moft refpected who, in unfolding the doctrines
of

of thofe who were more vehement in their oppofition to
lofophy, contending that it was not merely ufelefs but
pernicious, and the invention of the parent of evil.
“Others, however,” he proceeds, “carry their hofility
fo far as to rank philofophy with the greateft of evils,
and confider it as invented for the ruin of mankind by
fome malignant adverfary,” πρὸς τινὸς ἐυχρηστῆ πονηρῆ, that is, as
he himfelf explains the expreffion in another place, “the
devil.” To the former of thefe he artfully replies, cap. ii.
p. 327. (I.) If the inutility of philofophy were even as
certain as you pretend, ftill it is a thing both ufeful and ne-
ceffary that its vanity and emptinefs fhould be demonftrated,
and as this cannot be done without a knowledge of its prin-
ciples, we have, even here, an argument that the ftudy
of philofophy is not without its ufe ; ἐὶ καὶ ἀχρηστοῦ ἐν φι-
λοσοφίᾳ, ἐὶ εὐχρηστοῦ ἢ τῆς ἀχρηστίας βεβαίως, εὐχρηστοῦ. That
I have affigned to thefe words their true fenfe is, I think,
placed out of all doubt by what follows. Proceeding with
his reply he obferves, (II.) That even if philofophy, when
regarded apart by itfelf, was of no ufe whatever, and con-
tributed nothing towards aiding the Chriftian in the attain-
ment of his grand object, yet ftill an acquaintance with it
muft be highly ornamental to the character of a Chriftian
teacher, and by giving him a certain dignity and authority
in the eyes of his auditors, muft enable him, with the
greater eafe, to make an impreffion on the minds of thofe
who were hofile to the caufe of religion. With the other
clafs, who confidered philofophy as pernicious, and nothing
better than an invention of the devil himfelf, he difputes at
much length, and, as we are bound to confefs, neither unskil-
fully nor idly. We fhall merely give the fubftance of a few
of his arguments. (I.) In the firft place, then, he contends
that philofophy is not calculated to draw men away from
faith or piety, as its adverfaries affirmed, but was rather to
be looked upon as the fageguard of religion, inafmuch as it
fupplied men with a fuller demonftration of faith, συγγυμνα-
σίαν τινα πίστεως αποδεικτικὴν. (II.) That from a collation or
comparifon together of fuch of the principles of philofophy
and Chriftianity as were inconfiftent with or oppofed to each
other, the truth was rendered more apparent, and our flock
of knowledge confequently much improved, than which no-
thing could be more defirable or important. (III.) That
our

of religion, called in the aid of philosophical principles and precepts.

C E N T.
II.

XXVII. That

Contentions
amongst the
Christians
with regard
to philoso-
phy.

our conviction of mind must necessarily be strengthened and confirmed by our acquiring that more accurate knowledge of religion which was to be obtained through the assistance of philosophy; βίβαιον λαμβανόντων πείσμα τῆς ἀληθῆς καταλήψεως. And here, by the bye, I must observe, that I cannot help wishing for a new translation of Clement by some one well skilled in the Greek language. The old one by Hervetus fails, in many places, to give us the sense of the original, and in others expresses it in a very obscure manner. (IV.) That a knowledge of philosophy was requisite in order to repel and put to silence the enemies of the Christian faith, cap. iii. p. 325. since it was the practice of some of these to make sport of the truth, and represent it as replete with barbarism; τὸ βάζεσθαι ἐν παιδείᾳ τετιήμενοι: whilst others were accustomed to attack the Christians with various little teasing subtilties and jests, which, although founded in fallacy, were yet conceived with too much art to be exposed and refuted without some degree of skill. That we ought to provide ourselves, therefore, with philosophy, as a kind of defensive armour for repelling the weapons of sophistry. Cap. v. p. 331. From these arguments we may pretty well collect the motives by which the Christian teachers of the second century were led to cultivate philosophy. There was one inducement, however, of which Clement takes no notice, but which I cannot help considering as having been a very principal one. The Christian teachers were well aware of what essential benefit it would be in promoting their cause, not only with the multitude, but also amongst men of the higher orders, could the philosophers, whose authority and estimation with the world was unbounded, be brought to embrace Christianity. With a view, therefore, of accomplishing this desirable object, they not only adopted the study of philosophy themselves, but became loud in their recommendation of it to others, declaring that the difference between Christianity and philosophy was but trifling, and consisted merely in the former being of a nature somewhat more perfect than the latter. And it is most certain that this kind of conduct was so far productive of the desired effect, as to cause not a few of the philosophers to enrol themselves under the Christian banner. Those who have

C E N T.
II.The school
of Ammo-
nius Saccas.

XXVII. That particular scheme or mode of philosophising which was adopted at the first

have perused the various works written by such of the ancient philosophers as had been induced to embrace Christianity, cannot have failed to remark that the Christian discipline was regarded by all of them in no other light than as a certain mode of philosophising. But to return to Clement, in other places, *Stromat.* lib. i. cap. xvii. xviii. p. 366. we find him adverting to a third opinion entertained by many Christians respecting philosophy, and which holds, as it were, a middle station between the two already noticed. This opinion was, that philosophy had been surreptitiously brought down from heaven, and communicated to mankind by those angels whom, according to the ancients, a love of pleasure had induced to rebel against God, and take to themselves wives from amongst the daughters of men. "Εμοι δὲ δυνάμεις τινὰς ὑποθεσθηκόιας ἐμπνεύσαι τὴν πᾶσαν φιλοσοφίαν ὑπειλήφασιν. *Nonnulli autem* (whom he distinguishes from those who maintained that the devil himself was the author of philosophy) *universam philosophiam quasdam potestates e caelo delapsas inspirasse existimant.* To this opinion many of that age subscribed; amongst whom we find that Hermias, who was the author of a tract that has reached our days under the title of *Irrisio Philosophiæ*, and is commonly annexed to Tatian. In the exordium of his little work this writer says, *δοκεῖ γάρ μοι τὴν ἀρχὴν (φιλοσοφίαν) ἐιληφέναι ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν Ἀγγέλων ἀποστασίας. Videtur mihi (philosophia) ab angelorum defectione principium repetisse.* In proof of this he adduces the strifes and contentions of philosophers. Indeed Clement himself appears not entirely to dissent from this opinion. *Vid. Stromat.* lib. v. p. 650. Those who thought thus respecting the origin of philosophy, could not, of course, altogether reject and condemn it, but amongst them there were not wanting some, however, who deemed it sinful for men to avail themselves of what had reached them thus surreptitiously and through so polluted a channel. To these Clement replies, that it was indeed a very heinous crime in the fallen angels to be guilty of this theft, but that, notwithstanding the circumstance of its having been stolen, the excellence and value of the thing itself had been neither sullied nor diminished. Various other arguments, by which Clement defends the cause of philosophy, and combats those of the Christians who would fain have

first by the præfects of the school of Alexandria, and a few others, did not indeed maintain its ground for any great length of time, but was by degrees considerably departed from: the spirit of philosophising, however, so far from experiencing any decline or abatement, continued to increase and diffuse itself more and more, particularly towards the close of this century, when a new sect sprung up at Alexandria under the title of "The Modern Platonists." The founder of this sect was Ammonius Saccas, a man of a subtile penetrating genius, but prone to deviate, in many things, from right reason, and too much inclined to indulge in ridiculous flights of ima-

CENT.
II.

The school
of Ammonius
Saccas.

have arrested its progress, are to be met with in his *Stromata*. Great pains are particularly taken by him in refuting such as maintained that philosophy was invented by the evil one for the purpose of deceiving the human race and leading them astray from the truth; from whence we may infer, that this opinion was more generally received, and had taken deeper root than the rest in the minds of the multitude. To what I have above noticed I shall merely add what he urges in reply to those who were accustomed to cast in the teeth of the advocates of philosophy the words of St. Paul in *Col. ii. 8.* admonishing the Christians to beware of being spoiled through philosophy. In the opinion of Clement, *Stromat. lib. vi. cap. viii. p. 771. 799.* St. Paul is to be considered as addressing himself in this place to the more perfect Christians, or, as he terms them, those "who had attained to the very heights of Gnostic intelligence," τὸν δὲ τῆ γνωστικῆ μεταλαμβάνοντα ὕψους," and that what he meant was to caution such Christians against reverting to the philosophy of the Greeks, inasmuch as this species of philosophy was merely a kind of elementary learning, στοιχειώδη διδασκαλία, comprehending nothing more than the first rudiments of wisdom, a want of which could well be dispensed with in Christians, who had arrived at the highest degree of divine information. But all this is evidently strained, and in direct opposition to the obvious and natural sense conveyed by the words of St. Paul.

gination.

C E N T.
II.

The school
of Ammo-
nius Saccas.

gination [1]. In addition to a multitude of others who flocked to this man for instruction, his

[1] Particular celebrity attaches itself, both in sacred and literary history, to the name of Ammonius Saccas, a philosopher of the Alexandrian school, from whom proceeded those philosophical fanatics the "Modern Platonists," who, from the third century to the sixth, lorded it with despotic sway over every other sect throughout nearly the whole of the Roman empire. That the life and actions of a man capable of effecting so great a change in the aspect of Christianity as well as philosophy, should be for the most part so completely involved in obscurity as to defy elucidation, is certainly much to be regretted; since, could we obtain a more accurate knowledge as to these, it would no doubt enable us, with much greater readiness, to account for many opinions and customs that sprung up amongst the Christians subsequently to his time. Whatever could be obtained on the subject from ancient authors, hath been diligently collected together and illustrated, with his usual ability, by J. Brucker, *Histor. Critic. Philosoph.* tom. ii. p. 205, & seq. who has also entered at much length into the history of the sect of which Ammonius was the founder. The reader may also consult Jo. Alb. Fabricius, *Biblioth. Græc.* lib. iv. cap. xxvi. p. 159. Respecting the religion of Ammonius, in particular, there is considerable doubt. Porphyry, who had had the opportunity of hearing Plotinus, one of the principal disciples of Ammonius, says, (apud Euseb. *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xix. p. 220.) that he was born of Christian parents, but that, on arriving at man's estate, he went over to Paganism. Eusebius, however, contradicts Porphyry, and asserts that Ammonius continued steadfast in the Christian faith to the end of his life. This discordance in the testimony of Eusebius and Porphyry, as to the religion in which Ammonius ended his days, has occasioned much difference of opinion among men of erudition, some giving credit to the former, others to the latter. Those who hold with Porphyry have certainly arguments of considerable weight on their side, and feeling sensibly their force, I was some time since induced to express my conviction of the apostacy of Ammonius from Christianity. To pass over other things, who, let me ask, can easily persuade himself that the sect of the Modern Platonists, than whom scarcely any set of men ever occasioned greater evils and calamities

to

lectures were constantly attended by a great number of Christians, who were inflamed with

C E N T.
II.

an } The school
of Ammo-
nius Saccas.

to the Christians, could possibly have been founded by a man who was actually himself a Christian? The testimony of Eusebius as to this matter is not of the slightest weight; for it is evident that he was misled by the name, and confounded the philosopher Ammonius with a Christian writer whose name was similar. The Ammonius to whom Eusebius alludes had, he tells us, written a variety of things: Ammonius the philosopher, we know for certain, never published any thing. On a full review, however, of the merits of this controversy, I feel inclined to believe, that Ammonius, although, for the most part, an apostate in heart, and thoroughly averse from the principles entertained by the Christians in general, yet never openly seceded from the church, but disguised the real nature and tendency of his discipline. Learned men will see whether there be any weight in the reasons by which I have been led to this conjecture. (I.) When Ammonius first opened a school at Alexandria, and for a long time afterwards, he was undoubtedly, in the true sense of the word, a Christian. For many years Origen, Heraclas, and various others of the Christian youth, who had been captivated by a love of philosophy, sat under his tuition. But the teachers of the Alexandrian church would surely never have permitted these young men to select for their master a perfidious renegado. Apostates of this description were regarded in the light of impious pests; and the most positive injunctions were given for no one to hold converse with them. This one observation alone is sufficient to detract much from the authority of Porphyry's testimony respecting the defection of Ammonius; for, according to that, Ammonius, as soon as he was of an age to think for himself, and to comprehend the first rudiments of philosophy, renounced the profession of Christianity; which is notoriously false. (II.) There was no necessity for Ammonius to secede from the Christian church. So far from entertaining any thing like an enmity to Christ, he held him in veneration as a person of a divine character and a teacher of celestial wisdom. What he took exception to was the interpretation given by Christians to the maxims and precepts of the gospel. It was therefore very possible for him to continue amongst the Christians, and to join with them in paying every homage to Christ, but at the same time to assume the liberty of privately expounding the religion

C E N T. an eager desire after knowledge, and of whom
 II. two, namely, Origen and Heraclas, became
 after-

The school
 of Ammo-
 nius Saccas.

religion of the gospel according to that sense in which he had been led to view it himself. But it may perhaps be objected to me, that Ammonius, although he entertained a veneration for Christ, yet held it proper to worship the heathen deities, a thing altogether incompatible with Christian principles, and that, in the performance of this worship therefore, he must necessarily have separated himself from the church: but this difficulty is, I think, easy to be gotten rid of by any one acquainted with what the Ammonian discipline actually was. What Ammonius enjoined was not that these gods should be worshipped, but that they should not be treated with contempt; not that the worship of them was necessary, but that it was justifiable, decent, allowable. By the multitude, whose ruling passion is an eager appetite for bodily and sensual gratification, it was but fitting, according to the principles of the Ammonian sect, that these gods should have every sort of homage paid them, inasmuch as they were constituted by the supreme deity the guardians and dispensers of all those good things which minister to the delight of the senses; but no necessity whatever could exist for their being either invoked or worshipped by a wise man and a philosopher, whose object was the purifying of his soul, and keeping it, by means of meditation, as far as possible removed from every influence of the body. The gratifications of sense not entering into the views of the latter, he might of course, they held, omit cultivating the favour of those from whom such gratifications are to be sought, and should confine his adoration to the parent of souls alone, the Supreme Being. (III.) The disciples of Ammonius, as Porphyry declares in *Vit. Plotini*. c. iii. agreed amongst themselves, in conformity, no doubt, to an injunction of their preceptor, that they would not make commonly known the more abstruse and recondite doctrines of their master, from which resolution, however, they afterwards thought proper to recede. Ammonius himself also ever declined committing his opinions to writing, and would communicate them only by word of mouth, lest it might occasion him disturbance. But in none of his principles or maxims that have been divulged by his disciples is there any, even the minutest thing that could possibly excite against him any ill-will, or bring him into any sort of danger amongst the heathen worshippers. It appears, therefore, most likely that his motive for
 con-

afterwards very distinguished characters, the former succeeding to the presidency of the school, the latter to that of the church of Alexandria [m]. By the Christian disciples of Ammonius, and more particularly by Origen, who in the succeeding century attained to a degree of eminence scarcely credible, the doctrines which they had derived from their master were sedulously instilled into the minds of the youth with whose education they were entrusted, and by the efforts of these again, who were subsequently, for the most part, called to the ministry, the

C E N T.
II.
The school of
Ammonius
Saccas.

concealing the leading principles of his doctrine, was a fear of the light in which they would have been regarded by the Christians, amongst whom he had been born and passed the greater part of his life : for had they once been able to discover the true nature and tendency of his doctrine, not a doubt can exist but that his excommunication would have followed as a matter of course. (IV.) The circumstance of its being positively denied by Eusebius, and after him by Jerome, *Catal. Scriptor. Eccles.* cap. lv. that Ammonius ever deserted Christianity, although in regard to this they may not be strictly correct, is yet an argument that his apostacy was a thing utterly unknown to these most experienced Christian writers, and not only to them but to the whole Christian world. But how, let me ask, could the public defection of so great a man and philosopher, if it had ever occurred, have failed to make a noise in the world, or altogether have escaped recollection.

[m] Origen, in an epistle preserved by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. vi. cap. xix. p. 221. says that Heraclas, at the time of his becoming acquainted with him, had been nearly five years under the instruction of a certain professor of philosophy. The name of this instructor he does not mention; but since he himself was taught philosophy by Ammonius, there can be no doubt but that it was to this professor he alluded. The probability is, that even at that time the credit of Ammonius was much on the decline in Egypt, and that on that account Origen studiously avoided naming him, lest the discovery of who had been his master, might supply his adversaries with the means of exciting a still greater degree of animosity towards him.

C E N T. love of philosophy became pretty generally diffused throughout a considerable portion of the church.

II.

The philosophy of Ammonius.

XXVIII. The favourite object with Ammonius, as appears from the disputations and writings of his disciples, was that of not only bringing about a reconciliation between all the different philosophic sects, Greeks as well as barbarians [n], but also of producing a harmony of all religions, even of Christianity and hea-

[n] The sentiments of the sect as to this are clearly expressed by the emperor Julian, than whom it could never boast of a more illustrious member, *Oratione VI. contra Cynicos*, opp. p. 184. Edit. Spanhemian. Μηδεις ἐν ἡμῶν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν εἰς πολλὰ διαιρέιτω, μηδὲ εἰς πολλὰ τεμνέτω. μάλλον δὲ μὴ πολλὰς ἐκ μιᾶς ποιίτω. Ὅσπιν γὰρ ἀλήθειαι μία, εἶτω δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφία. *Quocirca philosophiam nobis plures in partes nemo dividat: vel potius plures ex una non faciat. Ut enim veritas una est; ita et philosophia* But, observes the emperor, it may be objected, in the first place, that there are a multitude of different sects. These sects however, he replies, are merely different modes of coming at the truth, and ought to be considered in no other light than as different routs by which men may travel towards the same place. For as those who design to go to Athens, are by no means restricted to one particular road, but are at liberty to adopt different courses by sea as well as by land; so they who are in quest of the truth may pursue different modes of arriving at it. But it may be objected, secondly, he remarks, that of those who have adopted these different modes many have wandered out of the way and lost themselves. His answer is, that this is very true; but let any one only be at the pains of ascertaining the courses chalked out by the respective parents or founders of these sects, and he will find them all consistent and tending to the same end, *πρωτεύσαντας δὲ ἐν τῇ ἰκάσῃ τῶν αἰρέσεων σκοπέιτο καὶ πάντα ἐν ἑσέσι σύμφωνα. Unius cujusque sectæ principes aspiciat ille, et quam sint omnia consentanea cognoscat.* This was the very principle adopted by Ammonius, whose wish it was to bring all the good and wise of all nations under one and the same rule and discipline. The followers of Aristotle and of Plato, said he, may

heathenism, and prevailing on all the wise and good men of every nation to lay aside their contentions and quarrels, and unite together as one large family, the children of one common mother. With a view to the accomplishment of this end therefore he maintained, that divine wisdom had been first brought to light and nurtured amongst the people of the east by Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, and other great and sacred characters [o]; that it was warmly espoused

C E N T.
II.
The philosophy of Ammonius.

may indeed differ and fall out, as may also the philosophers of Greece and the barbarous nations, but let any one go back to the first origin of the different sects, and he will find them all consentaneous.

[o] It is plain from the writings of Plotinus, Proclus, Simplicius, Damascius, and others of the Ammonian school, whose works have come down to our times in sufficient number, that this sect referred the origin of all wisdom to the east, and were ever fond of citing as authorities the writings of Hermes, the oracles of Zoroaster, the verses of Orpheus, and I know not what other reliques of the ancient philosophers of Egypt and the east. Nor do I think it by any means an improbable conjecture of some of the learned, that the writings of Hermes now extant, as well as the magic oracles, which are for the most part attributed to Zoroaster, were in fact the productions of the more recent Platonic school. Of the very great partiality entertained by this sect for the ancient philosophy of the Assyrians and Egyptians, which they contended was in every respect consentaneous to their own system of discipline, there is, amongst others, a notable testimony extant in the well-known work of Jamblicus *de Mysteriis Ægyptiorum*, the author of which in lib. i. cap. i. ii. unequivocally intimates that Pythagoras and Plato sought their philosophy from Egypt; and, to use his very words, *antiquas Mercurii columnas leſitantes philoſophiam inde conſtituiſſe*. The same author, as is observed by Gale in his annotations, p. 184. although he makes Hermes the parent of all wisdom, yet, in no very obscure terms admits that even before his time, the Chaldeans had been in the habit of philosophising. That Ammonius

C E N T.
II.The philoso-
phy of
Ammonius.

espoused and cherished by Pythagoras and Plato amongst the Greeks [p]; from whom, although the other Grecian sages might appear to have dissented,

nus himself not only instilled into the minds of his followers a veneration for this barbarous philosophy, as it was termed, but also placed the fountain of all wisdom in Upper Asia, in Chaldea, Persia, and India, is plain from what has been handed down to us by Porphyry in his *Life of that eminent disciple of the Ammonian school, Plotinus, cap. iii. p. 96, 97. edit. Fabrician, vol. iv. Biblioth. Græc.* For he states him to have attained to such a degree of proficiency under Ammonius that he even came to the determination of further prosecuting his studies amongst the magi of Persia and India, and intended to have gone thither with the army of the emperor Gordian; *Συνέχως τῷ Ἀμμωνίῳ παραμέμνοντα, τοσαύτην ἔξιν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ κτήσασθαι, ὡς καὶ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς Πέρσαις ἐπιτηδευομένης, πείραν λαβεῖν πύσαι καὶ τοῖς παρ' Ἰνδοῖς κατορδαμένης. Sedulus audivit (for eleven years) Ammonium, tantumque in philosophia profecit, ut philosophia insuper in qua Persæ se exercebant facere periculum afferre, atque etiam sapientiam precipue apud Indos probatam prosequi consulerit.* Plotinus could certainly never have imbibed this anxious desire to acquaint himself with the maxims and tenets of the Persians and Indians, had he not heard his master extol them and declare that philosophy had been communicated to Egypt from the east. Hence too it was, that when those degenerate Christians, who are distinguished by the title of Gnostics, brought forward what they termed the oracles and writings of Zoroaster, Zostrian, and others of the eastern magi, with a view of proving that their own principles were strictly in unison with the ancient philosophy of the east, Plotinus, Porphyry, and others of the Ammonian school, immediately made it their business to destroy the credibility of these writings, by shewing that they were not the productions of those illustrious characters to whom they were ascribed, as the reader will find related at length by Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus, cap. xvi. p. 118, 119.* For unquestionably these latter would never have troubled themselves to do this, had they not earnestly wished to have it generally believed that their own doctrine was the same with that wisdom which Zoroaster and other philosophers of the east had drawn from above, and communicated to mankind.

[p] Ammonius was evidently desirous of being thought a Platonist, and the title of Platonists was the denomination assumed.

dissented, yet that with nothing more than the exercise of an ordinary degree of judgment and attention, it was very possible to make this discordance entirely vanish, and shew that the only points on which these eminent characters disagreed were but of trifling moment, and that it was chiefly in their manner of expressing their sentiments that they varied [q]. The religion of the multitude, he also contended, went hand

C E N T.
II.

The philosophy of Ammonius.

assumed by the whole body of his disciples, as the reader may find proved from the testimony of ancient writers, by Brucker in his *History of Philosophy*, and by myself, in my dissertation *de Ecclesia per recentiores Platonicos turbata*. It may, indeed, at first appear somewhat strange that men who imagined Plato to have learnt his philosophy from the Egyptians, and the Egyptians themselves to have been indebted for their discipline to the people of the east, should have chosen to denominate themselves after the Grecian philosopher. Why not term themselves the disciples of Hermes, or Zoroaster, whom they revered as the very parents of philosophy? Our wonder, however, must cease when it is considered that Ammonius was of Grecian origin, that his auditors were Greeks, and that it was, moreover, the object of his disciples to acquire credit and obtain for themselves a reputation amongst the Greeks. From the Egyptians they, of course, had nothing to expect, inasmuch as these were always accustomed to look for instruction to the priests and wise men of their own nation, not to Greeks: but the Greeks, attached beyond measure to every thing of their own, held, as is well known, the philosophy of what they termed barbarous nations in the most sovereign contempt. It being a primary object, then, with Ammonius and his disciples to conciliate the favour of the Greeks, they were under the necessity of selecting for a patron some one or other of those whom the Greeks regarded as philosophers; and amongst these they could find none whom they could adopt as such with greater propriety and convenience than Plato.

[q] The scheme thus entertained by Ammonius of doing away all dissensions amongst philosophers, and making it appear that all the ancient sects, particularly the Platonic and the Aristotelian, were agreed as to every thing

CENT.

II.

The philo-
phy of
Ammonius.

hand in hand with philosophy, and with her had shared the fate of being by degrees corrupted and obscured with mere human conceits, superstition, and lies: that it ought therefore to be brought back to its original purity, by purging it of this dross, and expounding it upon philosophical principles: and that the whole which Christ had in view by coming into the world, was — to reinstate and restore to its primitive integrity, the wisdom of the ancients, — to reduce within bounds the universally prevailing dominion of superstition, — and in part to correct, and in part to exterminate, the various errors that had found their way into the different popular religions. This great design of bringing about an union of all sects and religions, the offspring of a mind certainly not destitute of genius, but distracted by fanaticism, and scarcely at all under the dominion of reason, required, in order to its execution, not only that the most strained and unprincipled interpretations should be given to ancient sentiments, maxims, documents, and narratives, but also that the assistance of frauds and fallacies should be called in: hence we find the works which the disciples of Ammonius left behind them abounding in things of this kind; so much so indeed, that it is impossible for them ever to be viewed in any other light than as deplorable monuments of wisdom run mad.

thing of moment, is distinctly unfolded by that illustrious disciple of the Ammonian school, Hierocles: (*Lib. de Fato* apud *Phot. Biblioth.* cod. ccciv. & cod. cccli. p. 283. & 730.) and whatever writings we have extant of any of his followers, concur in placing this matter out of all controversy.

XXIX. But

XXIX. But to descend more into particulars. Ammonius in the first place adopted the ancient and generally received principles of the Egyptians respecting the Deity, the world, the soul, providence, the power of dæmons, and the like. Agreeably, for instance, to what we well know to have been the doctrine maintained by the Egyptian philosophers of old, he contended that every thing was a constituent part of one great whole [r]: that the Deity could be severed from this universe only in imagi-

C E N T.
II.
The theoretical or speculative philosophy of Ammonius.

[r] That the whole system of the Ammonian philosophy was built on that discipline which was professed by the Egyptian priests, and which they made it their boast to have derived from Hermes, is to be proved, as well from a variety of other things, as in particular from this, that the very same dogma on which all the wisdom of the Egyptians rested for support, constituted also the leading principle of the Ammonian school, from whence all its other maxims and tenets took their rise, viz. that all things are from God, all things are in God, and all things are one; God and the universe constitute one whole, nor can they be separated except in imagination. Those who are conversant in the antiquities of Egypt well know, that this dogma comprehends the whole of the secret wisdom of that nation. The reader will find this treated of at much length by the author of that discourse *de Natura Deorum*, which is attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, and which, from its being generally thought to have been translated into Latin by Apuleius, is commonly printed amongst the works of this latter author. He will find also the other principles which we have here enumerated, there adverted to. See moreover Euseb. *Preparat. Evangel.* lib. iii. cap. ix. as also what is remarked by Cudworth in his *Intellectual System*, tom. i. p. 404. & seq. And that this same leading principle was most warmly espoused by Plotinus, Proclus, Simplicius, Jamblicus, and the whole herd of the Modern Platonists, is beyond a doubt; for what other than this do they say when they assert the world to be coupled with God and from all eternity to have emanated from God? Only let us attend to the prayer of Plotinus, the most famous of the disciples of Ammonius, offered up when he was dying, as recorded

C E N T.
II.

The theoretical or speculative philosophy of Ammonius.

imagination, or, which is the same thing, that this world had flowed from all eternity from the Deity: which is in fact assigning to the world an existence of equal duration with that of the Deity, although of a different kind; that all minds were equal in point of nature, but of very different degrees: that they were all, without exception, the offspring of the divine essence, and had therefore formerly all partaken of a state of bliss in the regions above: that most minds of the inferior order being stimulated by a desire to enjoy those pleasures which were to be derived to the senses from an alliance with matter, had descended into terrestrial bodies [s]: that every man therefore, in addition to a sensitive and mutable soul derived from the soul of the universe, possesses inclosed within his mortal frame, a mind unchangeable and nearly related to the Deity himself; and that hence it is the duty of a wise man to ascend in spirit to the parent of all things, and to strive by every means in his power to hold communion with him. From minds of the higher order, or, as they were termed, dæmons, the Deity had, he asserted, given to the different nations of the earth superintendants and

by his scholar Porphyry in the history of his life, cap. ii. p. 94. Μέλλων δὲ τελευτᾶν - - - εἰπων ὅτι σὲ ἔτι περιμένω καὶ Φύσας πεφᾶσθαι τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν θεὸν ἀνάγειν πρὸς τὸ ἐν τῷ παντὶ θεῖον. *Quum vero morti appropinquaret - - - adhuc te, inquit, exspecto, atque equidem jam annitor, quod in nobis divinum est ad divinum ipsum quod viget in universo redigere.*

[s] Hence we may account for what Porphyry says of Plotinus appearing to be, as it were, ashamed of the connection of his soul with the body; ἕως μὲν ἀσχυνομένην ἔτι ἐν σώματι εἶναι, *rudore quodam affici videbatur, quod anima ejus in corpore esset.* Vit. Plotin. cap. i. p. 91. where observe what Fabricius has remarked on this passage.

guardians

guardians, and to the different departments of nature governors and directors. Certain of these, distinguished beyond the rest for their virtue and power, he considered as presiding over the sun, the moon, the planets, and the other stars; whilst of the remainder, to whom was entrusted the care of inferior and terrene things, many were actuated by vicious propensities, and some were so completely destitute of every virtuous and dignified principle, as even to rejoice over others ill, and burn, as it were, with the lust of doing harm. His next care was to incorporate these principles with the Platonic discipline, a task of but little labour, inasmuch as, with the exception of but a few things, the tenets of Ammonius and those of the Athenian sage, were not distinguished from each other by any very material shades of difference [t]. In the last place he exerted every possible ingenuity

C E N T.
II.

The theoretical or speculative philosophy of Ammonius.

[t] The discipline of Plato differs in many respects from the wisdom of the Egyptians; in not a few things however the congruity between them is absolute and perfect. To incorporate the one with the other, therefore, could not be a work of much labour. Respecting that dogma which we have seen to be, as it were, the chief and corner-stone of the Egyptian and Ammonian philosophy, namely, that of the Deity and this universe constituting one great whole, there is no sort of accordance whatever between the system of Plato and that of the Egyptians. For Plato, as is proved beyond all controversy by his *Timæus*, although he maintained that the matter of this world is eternal, yet drew a distinction between it and God, and conceived that it was with the assent and by the will of the Deity that it had at some period been digested and reduced into form. In the hope therefore of being able to do away this discrepancy between the Egyptian and Platonic systems of discipline, the followers of Ammonius have exerted their abilities to the utmost, and have turned and twisted the *Timæus* of Plato in every possible way with a view to conceal its

repug-

C E N T.
II.

genuity and address in giving to the dogmas of the remaining sects, nay even to the fables of the ancient poets, and the history of the heathen deities, that kind of interpretation which made them appear in perfect unison with his system; and whenever he met with any thing in either of these that could by no means be brought to harmonise therewith, he rejected it as totally unfounded in reason [u].

The moral
philosophy of
Ammonius.

XXX. With this system of theoretical or speculative philosophy, which its author, a man of powerful talents, defended with no little portion of subtilty and address, was conjoined a course of moral discipline in the highest degree rigid and austere. On such people indeed as were necessarily involved in the cares and concerns of this life, Ammonius did not impose precepts of much difficulty in the observance, but suf-

repugnance to their own tenets respecting the eternity of the world. But with all their pains they have done nothing, except it be to prove that with them the ancient dogmas of the Egyptians possessed more weight and were held in greater esteem than the authority of Plato. As a fair specimen of the whole we refer the reader to the commentary of Proclus on the *Timæus* of Plato.

[u] This attempt to unite the principles of every other sect and religion with those of the Egyptians, is the grand feature that distinguishes this new philosophy from the Eclectic system, which flourished at Alexandria prior to the time of Ammonius. The Eclectics sought out and adopted from every sect all such things as appeared to them to make any near approach to the truth, and rejected what they considered as having little or no foundation in reason; but Ammonius, conceiving that not only the philosophers of Greece, but also all those of the different barbarous nations, were perfectly in unison with each other with regard to every essential point, made it his business so to temper and expound the tenets of all these various sects as to make it appear that they had all of them originated from one and the same source, and all tended to one and the same end.

ferred

ferred them to live agreeably to the laws of nature and those of their country; but every one who laid claim to the character of a wise man was strictly enjoined by him to assert the liberty of his divine and immortal part, by extricating it, as it were, from all connection with the body; the consequence of which would be, that it would, even in this life, enjoy a communion with the Deity, and when death should disencumber it of every gross and corporeal tie, escape free and unpolluted into the arms of the first great parent of all things. With this view he willed all such to lead a life resembling that to which Plato gives the denomination of *Orphic* [v]; to abstain from wine, flesh, and every kind of food which might tend to invigorate or refresh the body; to decline marriage, to court solitude, to abstract the mind from the senses and call it off from visible objects, to strive by means of contemplation to subdue the impulses and powers of the sensitive soul; in fine, to shrink from no exertion that might tend to free the immortal spirit from all corporeal influence, and restore it to a participation of the divine nature [w]. These obligations, to which, according

C E N T.
II.
The moral philosophy of Ammonius.

[v] Plato in lib. vi. *de Legibus*, p. 626. ed. Ficin. in treating of mankind during the primæval ages, observes, amongst other things, Σαρκῶν δ' ἀπέχοντο. Ὡς ἄχ' ὅσον ὃν ἐσθίειν, ἔδ' δὲ τὰς τῶν θεῶν βωμῆς αἵματι μιαίνειν. ἀλλὰ Ὀρφικοί τινὲς λεγόμενοι βίῳ ἐγγύοντο ἡμῶν τοῖς τότε, ἀψύχων μὲν ἐχόμενοι πάντων, ἐμψύχων δὲ τελευτήσιον πάντων ἀπεχόμενοι. *Carnibus vero abstinebant. Nam vesci carnibus et Deorum aras polluere sanguine impium videbatur. Ita Orphica quædam vita tunc vigebat. Inanimatis quippe omnibus vescabantur et ab animatis omnibus abstinebant.*

[w] More in the way of illustration, as to what we have here stated, is to be gathered from Porphyry alone in his work *περὶ ἀποχῆς*, or concerning abstinence from flesh, than from all the rest of the Ammonian sect of his time put together. For, although he abounds in subtilty, he yet surpasses,

C E N T.
II.The moral
philosophy of
Ammonius.

according to the Ammonian scheme, every wise man was subject, its author, as was natural for one that had been born and educated and constantly lived amongst Christians, was accustomed to expound and recommend in a language and phraseology evidently borrowed from the Christian discipline, a practice of which many very striking instances also occur in such of the writings of his followers as are extant among us at this day [x]. In addition to this rigid system of discipline, the offspring of the peculiar tenets

passes, in point of perspicuity, every other of the Modern Platonists, and treats not only of abstinence, but likewise of those other duties which he considered as attaching themselves to the character of a wise man. Vid. lib. i. § xxvii. et seq. p. 22—34.

[x] It has been observed long since by men of learning, that the writings of the Modern Platonists, such as Hierocles on the golden verses of Pythagoras, Simplicius, Jamblicus, and others, are replete with Christian phrases and expressions; and their conclusion has been, that these things were pilfered out of the sacred writings, and thus applied by the followers of Ammonius from an anxious desire to recommend their discipline by rendering it apparently consistent with the doctrines of Christianity. With regard to this, the reader may consult a dissertation of mine *de Studio Ethnicorum Christianos imitandi*, which is to be found amongst my other dissertations relating to ecclesiastical history. But there is certainly no occasion for our imputing to those men any thing like a wicked or fraudulent intention. For who, let me ask, can feel any considerable degree of surprise at finding a system of philosophy which originated with a man like Ammonius, apparently a Christian, unfolded with a certain colouring of Christianity, and explained in terms of common use amongst Christians? The sacred writings of the Christians must have been familiar to Ammonius, even from his tender years, and his ears must have been well accustomed to their peculiar forms of speech. Besides it is certain, that either with an artful view or from a downright error in judgment, he encouraged the opinion that there was no difference whatever, at least none of any moment, between the system of discipline which he himself sought to establish as the true one, and that which had been propounded

nets entertained by him respecting God and the human soul, Ammonius propounded to his followers an art fraught with less important benefits, and suited only to capacities of a refined and an exalted nature, which he termed *Theurgia*, and for which there can be no doubt but that he was indebted to the Egyptian priests. This art embraced the faculty of so consecrating and purifying by certain secret rites that part of the mind or soul which receives the images of corporeal things, as to render it capable of perceiving dæmons, and also of holding an intercourse with spirits or angels, and of performing, with their assistance, things admirable in themselves and utterly beyond the powers of human nature alone to accomplish. This species of magic was not cultivated by all the philosophers of the Modern Platonic school, but only by those of the higher order, who aspired to a sort of superiority over the rest. In fact an acquaintance with it was considered rather as ornamental than useful, and as by no means necessary in attaining to the chief good [y].

CENT.

II.

The moral
philosophy of
Ammonius.

XXXI. In

propounded by Christ. Wherefore he made no scruple, when discoursing on the necessity of purifying the soul and bringing it back to God, or in defining the nature of true virtue, to make use of Christian terms and phrases, and whatever things of this kind came from his mouth were, no doubt, treasured up with a sort of reverence by his disciples, and soon communicated throughout the whole sect.

[y] The ridiculous and empty species of science so celebrated amongst the Modern Platonists under the name of *Theurgia*, bore a very near resemblance to that kind of magic which was termed good or lawful, in opposition to the black or illicit magic, and was, indisputably, of Egyptian origin. Nothing indeed could be more easy than for the Egyptians, who believed that the universe was filled with good and evil dæmons, to fall into the error of imagining that there was an art, by means of which the good will of these dæmons might

C E N T.
II.

The senti-
ments of
Ammonius
respecting
the different
popular reli-
gions.

XXXI. In order that the different popular religions by which a plurality of Gods was recognized,

might be obtained. The nature of this science is sufficiently explained by Augustine *de Civitate Dei*, lib. x. cap ix. p. 107. tom vii. opp. *Theurgiam*, says he, *Porphyrus utilem esse dicit mundandæ parti animæ, non quidem intellectuâli, quæ rerum intelligibilium percipitur veritas nullas habentium similitudines corporum, sed spiritali, quæ corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines. Hanc enim dicit per quasdam consecrationes Theurgicas, quas teletas vocant, idoneam fieri atque aptam susceptioni spirituum et angelorum et ad videndos Deos.* The rational soul derived no benefit whatever from this science, and it was therefore very possible for any one to be happy and blessed without understanding any thing of it; hence we may perceive the reason of its not being cultivated by the whole body of the Platonists. *Ex quibus tamen, continens Augustine, Theurgicis teletis fatetur intellectuâli animæ nihil purgationis accedere, quod eam faciat idoneam ad videndum Deum suum, perspicienda ea quæ vere sunt (viz. τὰ ὄντα).*
 ——— *Denique animam rationalem — in superna posse dicit evadere, etiamsi quod ejus spirituale est, nulla Theurgica arte fuerit purgatum: porro autem a Theurgo spiritalem purgari hætenus, ut non ex hoc ad immortalitatem, æternitatemque perveniat.* These few sentences certainly offer a long and extensive field for comment in the way of illustration; at present however I shall study to be brief. According to the Modern Platonists man is possessed of a twofold soul; the one rational and generated of the Deity, the other sensitive and capable of being impressed with the images of mundane things, and derived from the soul of the corporeal world. The former of a nature imperishable and immortal, the latter extinguishable and of merely finite duration. Each, during its continuance in the body, is inert, and devoid of light, but may, to a certain degree, be illuminated, quickened and refined. The means by which the rational soul may be gradually purified and illuminated are contemplation, the practice of virtue, constant exercitation, abstinence, and extenuation of the body. When properly purified, it is capable, without the assistance of eyes, of seeing the Deity himself, and all those things which have a true and real existence, and becomes united with God by the closest and most indissoluble of ties. The sensitive soul is purified by means of certain natural remedies well known to those who are proficients in the science termed *Theurgia*; for being generated of matter, by matter alone can it be affected, even as corrupt

cognized, might not appear repugnant to his doctrine, Ammonius endeavoured to reduce the whole history of the heathen deities, as it had been handed down by the poets and inculcated by the priests, to somewhat of a rational system, and contended that it was altogether an allegorical exhibition of either natural or moral precepts and maxims [z]. Conformably to the Christian faith, he maintained that there was one God, from whom all things had proceeded. The host of beings whom the multitude and the heathen priesthood commonly honoured with the name of gods, he would not allow to be actually gods, but merely the ministers of God,

C E N T.
II.

The sentiments of Ammonius respecting the different popular religions.

rupt bodies are to be amended by contrivance and art with the assistance of such powers as are contained in herbs, precious stones, and various other things. Being thus cleansed of its impurities, this kind of soul becomes capable of perceiving dæmons and angels, and of maintaining a familiar intercourse with them. Nor is this at all to be wondered at: for the dæmons, according to the Ammonian scheme, are clothed with bodies of a slender and refined texture, which are invisible to mankind whilst the senses remain in a dull, corrupt state, but become apparent and visible when once those things are removed by which the faculties are clogged and rendered inert. For the same reason the celestial and rational soul, notwithstanding that it may have been purified from all contagion of the body and the senses, and entirely cleansed from every thing vicious and corrupt, can never arrive at any knowledge of, or intercourse with dæmons. For it possesses not the faculty of perceiving sensible things, and is therefore incapable of discerning such natures as are joined to bodies, although those bodies may be of a subtile and refined order, but erecting itself above every thing corporeal, it arrives by inexplicable means at a knowledge and intimate connection with its first great parent.

[z] The whole Ammonian school was devoted to allegory, and converted the history of the heathen gods into a sort of philosophy. As a specimen, we refer the reader to Porphyrius *de Antro Nympharum apud Homer. de Styge*, and others of his smaller pieces.

OF

CENT.
II.

The sentiments of Ammonius respecting the different popular religions.

or dæmons, to whom the supreme governor of the universe had committed the superintendance and guardianship of nations, or the direction of certain parts of nature, or finally the administration and guidance of human affairs and actions [a]. To these agents of divine providence he thought it reasonable that a certain sort of honour and worship should be paid: just as amongst men a certain degree of attention and respect is shewn to the legates of kings, and inferior magistrates; but he by no means deemed it necessary that they should be addressed with the same ceremonies that were used in worshipping the Deity, much less that they should be conciliated or appeased with sacrifices and the blood of animals. According to him, none but natures that were inimical to the human race, and that delighted in sensuality, could find any gratification in the death and blood of animals. The offerings in which such natures as resembled and were allied to the Supreme Deity took pleasure were frankincense, hymns, herbs, and things altogether innoxious. It was no other than fitting, he conceived, that prayers should be addressed to these agents of the

[a] Paulus Orosius, *Historiar.* lib. vi. cap. i. p. 364, 365. *Quidam dum in multis Deum credunt, multos Deos indiscreto timore finxerunt. Sed hinc jam vel maxime, cum auctoritate veritatis (that is, the Christian religion) operante, tum ipsa etiam ratione discutiente, discessum est. Quippe cum et philosophi eorum — dum intento mentis studio quærent, scrutanturque omnia, unum Deum auctorem omnium repererunt, ad quem unum cuncta referrentur; unde etiam nunc pagani, quos jam declarata veritas (i. e. the Christian religion) de contumacia magis, quam de ignorantia, convincit, cum a nobis discutuntur, non se plures Deos sequi, sed sub uno Deo magno plures ministros venerari fatentur.*

Deity,

Deity, inasmuch as to them was committed the dispensation of God's benefits and blessings, but that prayers of this kind were to be regulated by reason and wisdom, since the good things that were placed at the disposal of these dæmons were those which concerned merely the welfare of the body, not such as might benefit the celestial and immortal spirit. It became therefore a wise man, he held, whose main object ought to be to improve the excellence and felicity of his mind, for the most part to pass by these inferior deities, and prefer his petitions at once to the Supreme Being.

C E N T.
II.

XXXII. With a view to render Christianity apparently consistent with his new philosophy and the ancient religion, Ammonius admitted that Christ was a great and wise character, full of the counsel and power of the Deity, an admirable *Theurgist*, and a friend to the dæmons: that the discipline which he had instituted was of a most holy nature, and had been confirmed by miracles and preternatural signs: but he denied that Christ had ever taught any thing repugnant to the principles which he himself sought to establish, or that he had endeavoured to abolish the ancient popular religious rites and the worship of the dæmons that had been appointed by the Deity to preside over nations and the different departments of nature [b]. And that he might the more readily procure for this part of his system

The tenets of
Ammonius
respecting
Christ.

[b] The reader will understand me as not meaning to deny that amongst those who adopted the Ammonian discipline, there were some that were alike inimical to Christ and to the Christians. We have an illustrious in-

C E N T. system an acceptance with the world, he endeavoured as far as possible, by means of strained inter-

II.

The tenets of
Ammonius
respecting
Christ.

stance of this in the emperor Julian, and other examples might easily be adduced from amongst the Platonists of that age. For the hatred which these persons bore to Christ and his followers, particular reasons might be assigned, which those who are versed in matters of antiquity will be at no loss in discovering: but that Ammonius himself considered Christ as entitled to the highest honour, and that his true followers, although they were the authors of most grievous injuries to the Christians, yet manifested a respect and esteem for the character of Christ himself, is placed beyond a doubt by a variety of testimonies. Propriety could not allow that a man who made it his object to bring about an union of all sects and religions, and maintained that Christ had come for the express purpose of reinstating the true and most ancient philosophy and religion of the human race, should either think or speak otherwise than honourably of this same Christ. Neither is it at all probable that the veneration for Christ, which he had imbibed, as it were, with his mother's milk, could easily have been renounced by a man who, in departing from the true and right faith, appears to have been influenced, not so much by a depraved and vicious disposition, as by too great a partiality for the Egyptian philosophy and the ardour of an exuberant imagination. The reader will probably not be displeas'd at my adducing some passages from ancient authors in support of what I have thus advanced. Augustine enters much into dispute with those philosophers of his time who profess'd a respect and veneration for Christ, but maintained that the Christians had not adhered to the principles of their master. Lib. i. *de Consensu Evangelistarum*, tom. iii. P. II. opp. cap. vi. § xi. p. 5. *Hoc dicunt, says he, illi vel maxime Pagani, qui Dominum ipsum Jesum Christum culpant aut blasphemare non audent, eique tribuunt excellentissimam sapientiam, sed tamen tanquam homini: discipulos vero ejus, dicunt, magistro suo amplius tribuisse quam erat, ut eum Filium Dei dicerent, et Verbum Dei per quod facta sunt omnia, et ipsum ac Deum patrem unum esse: ac si qua similia sunt in apostolicis literis, quibus eum cum Patre unum Deum colendum esse didicimus: honorandum enim tanquam sapientissimum virum putant; colendum autem tanquam Deum negant.* Some little while after, § 14. cap. viii.

interpretations, or rather perversions, to enlist on his side the tenets of the Christians respecting

C E N T.

II.

The tenets of Ammonius respecting Christ.

p. 6. he gives us to understand what opinion they entertained respecting Christ's miracles, namely, that he was a Theurgist or magician of the first rank, and that he left behind him two books, comprising the principles of the Theurgic or magic art. *Ita vero isti desipiunt, ut illis libris, quos eum (Christ) scripsisse existimant, dicant contineri eas artes, quibus eum putant illa fecisse miracula quorum fama ubique percrebuit: quod existimando se ipsos produnt quid diligant et quid affectent.* Augustine adds that possibly books of this kind might have been written by some one under the name of Christ. Amidst much other matter it is expressly intimated by Augustine that this reverence for Christ had been handed down to the philosophers of his time by the Platonists, and particularly by that illustrious star of the Ammonian school, Porphyry. Cap. xv. p. 8. *Quid? Quod isti vani Christi laudatores et Christiane religionis obliqui obtrectatores propterea non audent blasphemare Christum, quia quidam philosophi eorum, sicut in libris suis Porphyrius Siculus prodidit, consuluerunt deos suos quid de Christo responderent, illi autem oraculis suis Christum laudare compulsi sunt. — Ac per hoc isti, ne contra deorum suorum responsa contentur, continent blasphemias a Christo, et eas in discipulos ejus effundunt.* Concerning those oracles by which the heathen deities are said to have extolled the character of our Blessed Saviour, Augustine treats more at large in lib. xix. *de Civitate Dei*, cap. xxiii. p. 428. & seq. tom. vii. opp. from Porphyry's work *de Philosophia ex Oraculis*. Amongst other things he remarks, *Dicit etiam bona philosophus iste de Christo. — Denique tanquam mirabile aliquid atque incredibile prolaturus, præter opinionem, inquit, profecto quibusdam videatur esse quod dicturi sumus; Christum enim dii piissimum pronuntiaverunt et immortalem factum, et cum bona prædicatione ejus meminerunt: Christianos vero pollutos inquit, et contaminatos et errore implicatos esse dicunt, et multis talibus adversus eos blasphemias utuntur.* The oracle itself, of which the sense is thus given by Porphyry, I purposely omit. A Latin translation of it is to be found in Augustine, but it is not a clear one. Eusebius gives it in Greek from the above-cited work of Porphyry in his *Demonstratio Evangel.* lib. iii. cap. viii. p. 134. Another oracle, bearing in like manner honourable testimony to the character of Christ, namely, one delivered by

C E N T II. ing the Deity, the human soul, the world, the trinity of persons in the Godhead, good and bad

The tenets of Ammonius respecting Christ.

the Milesian Apollo, is to be met with in Lactantius *Institut. Divinar.* lib. iv. cap. xiii. p. 446. Augustine conceives that these oracles were either the inventions of the enemies of Christianity, or that they were delivered by dæmons for the purpose of seducing the Christians from the true religion. *Quis ita stultus est ut non intelligat aut ab homine callido eoque Christianis inimicissimo hæc oracula fuisse conficta, aut consilio simili ab impuris dæmonibus ista fuisse responsa; ut scilicet quoniam laudant Christum propterea veraciter credantur vituperare Christianos; atque ita, si possint, intercludant viam salutis æternæ, in qua fit quisque Christianus.* To this opinion of Augustine, that these oracles were the inventions of the enemies of the Christians, I very readily subscribe. The philosophers, the adversaries of the Christians, as Augustine expressly states in the former-cited passage, consulted the heathen deities respecting the character of Christ; and the priests of those deities, without doubt, returned an answer conformably to what they knew to be the opinion of the persons thus consulting them. But it strikes me, that these philosophers were influenced by a different motive in procuring these oracles from that which suggested itself to Augustine. In fact, they had learnt from Ammonius, the founder of their sect, that Christ was a character of the first eminence, and worthy of the highest praise; and this opinion they scrupled not openly to profess. To the numerous enemies of the Christian religion, however, their conduct in this respect was highly offensive, and particularly to the heathen priesthood, who were apprehensive that the praises thus bestowed on Christ might injure the cause of Paganism, and would rather have had Christ blended with the Christians in one indiscriminate censure and malediction. The Platonic philosophers, therefore, with a view to remove from themselves every sort of odium on this account, and to prove that the opinion which they maintained respecting Christ was one that might be justified, made enquiry of the gods as to what was to be thought of Christ's character: and having obtained an answer, such as they desired, no further room was left for cavil, inasmuch as by producing these oracles they could at any time prove to demonstration that the opinion of the gods was on their side. And who should pretend to call men in question
for

bad angels, and the like, as well as their different maxims and precepts relating to piety and

C E N T.
II.

morals.

The tenets of
Ammonius
respecting
Christ.

for maintaining opinions that had received the sanction of the gods? Let us now see what other sentiments Augustine states to have been entertained by these philosophers respecting Christ and the Christians. They denied that it had been Christ's intention to abrogate the worship of the heathen deities. *Veruntamen*, says he, *de Consens. Evangelistar.* lib. i. cap. xvi. p. 8. *isti ita disputant, quod hæc everfio templorum, et damnatio sacrificiorum, et confractio simulacrorum non per doctrinam Christi fiat, sed per discipulorum ejus, quos aliud quam ab illo didicerunt, docuisse contendunt; ita volentes Christianam fidem, Christum honorantes laudantesque, convellere.*

On the contrary they maintained, that Christ himself paid an honorary worship to these deities, and that it was by their, or in other words the dæmons', assistance he wrought his miracles, l. c. cap. xxxvi. p. 18. *Ita enim volunt et ipsum credi, nescio quid aliud scripsisse, quod diligunt, nihilque sensisse contra deos suos, sed eos potius magico ritu coluisse; et discipulos ejus non solum de illo fuisse mentitos, dicendo illum Deum, per quem facta sunt omnia, cum aliud nihil quam homo fuerit, quamvis excellentissimæ sapientiæ; verum etiam de diis eorum non hoc docuisse quod ab illo didicissent.*

They were ready, however, to admit that Christ had abolished the worship of certain dæmons of the inferior order, and had enjoined men to address themselves to the deities of heaven alone, and, more particularly to the Supreme Governor of all things. That such was their opinion, Augustine proves by a notable passage from Porphyry, of which he gives us the following translation into Latin in his work *de Civitate Dei*, lib. xix. cap. xxiii. § iv. p. 430. tom. vii. opp. *Sunt* (the reader will recollect that it is Porphyry who is speaking) *spiritus terreni minimi loco quodam malorum demonum potestati subjecti. Ab his sapientes Hebræorum quorum unus iste etiam Jesus fuit; ab his ergo Hebræi demonibus pessimis et minoribus spiritibus vetabant religiosos et ipsi vacare prohibebant: venerari autem magis cælestes deos, amplius autem venerari Deum patrem. Hoc autem et dii præcipiunt, et in superioribus ostendimus, quemadmodum animum advertere ad Deum monent, et illum colere ubique imperant. Verum indocti et impiæ naturæ (i. e. the Christians) quibus vere fatum non concessit a diis dona obtinere, neque habere Jovis immortalis notionem, non audientes et deos (i. e. those oracles which he had antecedently adduced) et divinos viros, (Ammonius, whom, it appears from*

C E N T.
II.The tenets of
Ammonius
respecting
Christ.

morals (c). Such points of the Christian doctrine as it surpassed his ingenuity to render by any

the testimony of Hierocles *apud Phot. Biblioth.* p. 283. they were accustomed to style *θεοδιδάκτος*, Plotinus, whom in like manner they termed *θεός*, and others who had been taught by these, *deos quidem omnes recusaverunt, prohibitos autem demones, et hos non odisse sed revereri, Deum autem simulantes colere, ea sola per quæ Deus adoratur, non agunt. Nam Deus quidem utpote omnium pater nullius indiget (i. e. he delights not in sacrifices and victims), sed nobis est bene cum eum per justitiam et castitatem aliasque virtutes adoramus, ipsam vitam præcem ad ipsum facientes per imitationem et inquisitionem de ipso. Inquisitio enim purgat,* (by *inquisitio* he here means contemplation, meditation, and the abstraction of the mind from the senses; a mind to which this kind of discipline had become familiar, was considered by the Modern Platonists as in the highest degree purified and cleansed,) *imitatio deificat affectivè ad ipsum operando.* He (Porphyry) had said a little before, *Anima (of Christ) aliis animabus fataliter dedit errore implicari. Propterea ergo diùs exosi — ipse vero (Christ) pius et in calum sicut pii concessit. Itaque hunc quidem non blasphemabis, misereberis autem hominum dementia, ex eo in eis facile præceptisque periculum.* What we hear from Porphyry, that illustrious enemy of the Christians, we may consider ourselves as hearing from Ammonius himself and his principal disciple Plotinus. For as it is certain that what Plotinus taught he had derived from Ammonius, so may we be sure that for whatever is to be gathered from Porphyry, he himself was indebted to Plotinus.

[c] That the Modern or Ammonian Platonists made it their object, in a certain degree, to reconcile the maxims of the Egyptian and ancient Platonic philosophy with those of Christianity, must be plain to any one who shall consider the way in which Plotinus expresses his opinion respecting the existence of three principles or chief hypostases in one God; the manner in which all the philosophers of this sect speak concerning demones and spirits, their tenets respecting the nature of God and the human soul, and the opinions they avowed respecting the world and its origin. Most assuredly nothing can be more apparent than that all these things are so treated of and explained by them as to make it appear that little or no difference existed between their system of discipline and Christianity. They borrow from the Christians distinctions, words, phrases, and

any means subservient to his purpose, he pronounced to be unauthorised additions that had been made to the system of Christ, by ignorant and injudicious disciples. The principal articles to which he thus took exception as interpolations, were those which respected the divinity of Christ, the salvation obtained through him for the human race, the abandoning the worship of a plurality of gods and adoring the one only Supreme Being. None of these points, he contended, had ever been inculcated by Christ himself, nor had he forbidden the paying of an honorary worship to all dæmons indiscriminately, but only to such as were of an evil nature. When in the following age this matter was brought into dispute, and the miracles of our Blessed Saviour were urged by the Christians in proof both of his divinity and also of his having meant to explode the worship

C E N T.
H.
The tenets of
Ammonius
respecting
Christ.

and whatever else they can, and accommodate them all to their own way of thinking. Indeed so dexterous were they at this, that we find them, according as it might best suit their purpose, at one time corrupting and debasing the Christian tenets in order to make them accord with their own opinions, whilst at another they, on the contrary, correct and amend their own principles so as to make them coincide with the maxims of Christianity. Hence it came to pass that the greater part of these Platonists, upon comparing the Christian religion with the system of Ammonius, were led to imagine that nothing could be more easy than a transition from the one to the other, and, to the great detriment of the Christian cause, were induced to embrace Christianity without feeling it necessary to abandon scarcely any of their former principles. A memorable passage as to this occurs in Augustine's book, *de Vera Religione*, cap. iv. § vii. p. 559. tom. i. opp. *Itaque si hanc vitam illi viri nobiscum rursus agere potuissent, viderent profecto, cujus auctoritate facilius consuleretur hominibus, et paucis mutatis verbis et sententiis Christiani fierent, sicut plerique recentiorum nostrorumque temporum Platonici fecerunt.* See also his epistle to Dioscorus, ep. lxxviii. § xxi. & xxxiii. p. 255. 260. tom. ii. opp.

C E N T. of dæmons, the philosophers of the Ammonian school maintained that several of the more eminent of the Pagan worshippers, such as Apollonius Tyanæus, Pythagoras, Euclid, Apuleius, and others, had immortalized their names by miracles equally great and splendid with those which had been wrought by Christ [d].

II.
The tenets of Ammonius respecting Christ.

XXXIII. When

[d] It appears clearly to have been the general practice of the Platonists of the third and fourth centuries, to compare our Blessed Saviour with Apollonius Tyanæus, Pythagoras, and other philosophers who were renowned for their miracles; and that Philostratus wrote the life of Apollonius, Porphyry and Iamblicus that of Pythagoras, and other authors, most likely, those of other wise men, expressly with a view to shew that, amongst the worshippers of the heathen deities, there had been men distinguished for acts of a similar nature with those by which Christ had rendered himself illustrious. That such was their object, the reader will find fully proved by Gothofred Olearius, in his notes on Philostratus, and by L. Kuster in his annotations on Iamblicus and Porphyry's life of Pythagoras. Those who undertook the idle and absurd task of making this comparison, found it necessary to detract much from the honour that is due to the Saviour of the world, but they did not make it their aim to deprive his character of every sort of dignity and glory. Their object was merely to bring him down to a level with those whom they deemed to have been the wisest and best of mortals, and who bore an affinity to the immortal gods. The only things therefore for which they contended in this way were these two; First, that the miracles of Christ do not afford any absolute or positive proof of his divinity, as the Christians maintained; inasmuch as it could be shewn, that men, having no pretensions to the rank of deities, had performed things of a similarly wonderful nature; Secondly, that Christ could never have meant altogether to overturn and abolish the worship of dæmons, (*i. e.* the heathen deities,) or the ancient popular religions, since the most religious of the heathen worshippers had distinguished themselves by miracles, even as he. These very Lives, therefore, of the ancient philosophers, and the comparisons therein drawn between them and Christ, most plainly prove that the sect of Ammonius or that of the Modern

XXXIII. When once this passion for philosophising had taken possession of the minds of the Egyptian teachers and certain others, and been gradually diffused by them in various directions throughout the church, the holy and beautiful simplicity of early times very quickly disappeared, and was followed by a most remarkable and disastrous alteration in nearly the whole system of Christian discipline. This very important and deeply to be regretted change had its commencement in the century now under review, but it will be in the succeeding one that we shall have to mark its chief progress. One of the earliest evils that flowed from this immoderate attachment to philosophy was the violence to which it gave rise in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. For whereas the Christians had from a very early period imbibed the notion that under the words, laws, and facts, recorded in the sacred volume, there is a latent sense concealed, an opinion which they appear to have derived from the Jews [e], no sooner did this passion for philosophising take possession of their

C E N T,
II.
Forced interpretation of the scriptures.

dern Platonists held the character of Christ in very great honour, although they vilified and would willingly have altogether extirpated the Christians.

[e] In the writings of fathers, even of this century, express notice is occasionally taken of those four senses of Scripture to which the Christian expositors were for so many ages accustomed to direct the attention of their readers, namely, the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the anagogical. The first three of these are noticed by Justin Martyr, (*Dial. cum Tryphone*, p. 333. edit. Jebbian.) who, after making some remarks as to the sense attached to the words of the sacred volume, adds, *καὶ γὰρ ἐν παρεχολῇ λίθου πολλαχῆ καλεῖν ἀπέδειξα τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ ἐν τροπολογία Ἰακώβ και Ἰσραήλ. Nam per parabolam*, (that to which Justin here applies the term

Parable

C E N T.

II.

Forced interpretation of the scriptures.

their minds, than they began with wonderful subtilty to press the Scriptures into their service in support of all such principles and maxims as appeared to them consonant to reason; and at the same time most wretchedly to pervert and twist every part of those divine oracles which opposed itself to their philosophical tenets or notions. The greatest proficient in this pernicious practice were those Egyptian teachers who first directed the attention of the Christians towards philosophy, namely, Pantænus and Clement. Their expositions of the Scriptures have not reached our days, but it appears from such of the writings of Clement as are at present extant, that he and Pantænus are not to be considered as having struck out an absolutely original path in this respect, for that in reality they were merely followers

Parable is, by subsequent Christian writers, denominated *Allegory* or the allegorical sense,) *illum (i. e. Isaiah) persæpe Christum vocare lapidem ostendi, et tropologice Jacobum et Israelem.* Of the *anagogical* sense, as they term it, whereby the scriptural accounts of things appertaining to this life are applied to spiritual and heavenly matters, many examples are to be met with likewise in Justin, and also in Clement. That the early Christians derived this practice of annexing to the words of Scripture several different senses, from the Jews, no one, at present, appears in the least to doubt. It is moreover to be remarked that although Justin, Irenæus, and the other fathers of this century, whose writings have come down to our times, are continually obtruding on us mystical and allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures, yet not one of them who dwelt without the confines of Egypt ever attempts by means of ingenuity to elicit from the sacred writings any of the dogmas or maxims of philosophy. By all of them the words of Scripture are made to refer to Christ and to heavenly things alone, although in a manner not altogether the most happy or judicious. This appears to me not a little extraordinary, and particularly in Justin Martyr, who certainly considered philosophy as of divine origin.

of

of the celebrated Alexandrian Jew, Philo, whose writings they assiduously studied, and whose empty wisdom they were unhappily led to admire and to imitate [*f*].

C E N T.
II.

Forced interpretation of the scriptures.

XXXIV. With

[*f*] Nearly all those corruptions, by which, in the second and subsequent centuries, Christianity was disfigured, and its pristine simplicity and innocence almost wholly effaced, had their origin in Egypt, and were thence communicated to the other churches. This province also gave birth to the discommendable practice of glossing over philosophical opinions with the words of Scripture, or rather of straining scriptural phrases and expressions in support of such maxims as might appear to be dictated by reason. The first Christians who made this art their study were Pantænus and Clement, successively præfects of the catechetical school of Alexandria; men of unquestionable worth and piety, but immoderately devoted to what they deemed the true philosophy. It appears from St. Jerome, *Catal. Scriptor. Eccl.* cap. xxxvi. that many commentaries on the Holy Scriptures by Pantænus were formerly extant; but they have all long since fallen victims to the ravages of time. The manner, however, in which he expounded the sacred writings may be collected from the works that are extant of his disciple and successor, Clement of Alexandria. One of his rules of interpretation, in particular, is preserved by Clement in his *Eclogæ ex Scripturis Prophetarum*, subjoined to his works, § lvi. p. 1002. edit. Potterian. Pantænus, it there appears, laid it down as a maxim, that the prophets, in what they uttered, spake for the most part indefinitely, using the present tense at one and the same time both for the future and the præterite. Taking this rule of his preceptor for his guide in expounding the words of David, Psal. xviii. 6. *Et in sole posuit tabernaculum suum*, Clement first of all assumes that they are to be understood as relating to Christ, and then goes on to expound the præterite *posuit* as referring both to the past time and the future; and proceeding upon this plan, the words of David are found to admit, not merely of one, but several very extraordinary interpretations. Indeed it cannot fail to strike every one, that this rule of Pantænus is every way calculated to admit of various different senses being applied to almost every word of the sacred volume: and there cannot be a doubt but that it was invented expressly with a view of introducing the utmost latitude of interpretation in the exposition

C E N T.

II.

The practice
arises of ex-
pounding
Christian te-
nets upon
philosophi-
cal princi-
ples.
The secret
discipline.

XXXIV. With this evil was connected another that proved equally detrimental to the interests

tion of the Holy Scriptures, so as to admit of their being accommodated *ad libitum* to the occurrences of past as well as future times. Let us assume merely what Pantænus assumed, namely, that the words of Scripture relating to actions or occurrences do not refer to one particular time, but to several different periods; and it will be difficult to point out any part of the sacred volume that may not be wonderfully dilated, and absolutely loaded, as it were, with a variety of senses or interpretations. Clement, the disciple of Pantænus, was the author of a work of considerable length, to which he gave the title of *Hypotyposes*, and in which he is said to have given an exposition of nearly all the sacred writers one after another. He likewise wrote a commentary on what are termed the Canonical Epistles. These works are lost, but in such of his writings as remain we meet with sufficiently numerous examples of the manner in which he was accustomed to expound the Scriptures. To give an instance or two by way of illustration. In his *Stromata*, lib. i. cap. xxviii. p. 426. we find it asserted, that the Mosaic laws have a four-fold sense; τετραχῶς δὲ ἡμῖν ἐκληπτέον τῶ νόμῳ τὴν βέλησιν. He however enumerates only three of those senses; the mystical, the moral, and the prophetic. Every law, according to him, in the first place represents some sign, that is, the words of the law are images of other things, and, in addition to their proper sense, have an improper or secondary one also attached to them. Secondly, every law comprises a precept for the right ordering of life. Thirdly, every law, like a prophecy, predicts something future. As Clement enumerates only three senses in which the law is to be understood, although he speaks of four, Hervetus, his translator into Latin, conjectures that in the word τετραχῶς there is a corruption, and that instead of it we ought to read τριχῶς. But the learned writer has, in this respect, fallen into an error. Clement in his enumeration passes over the natural sense attached to the words of the law, as a thing too obvious to require pointing out, and particularizes merely the three less evident ones. For the investigating these recondite senses of the Mosaic law with effect, he deems philosophy, or the dialectic art, an highly necessary auxiliary. Διαλεκτικώτερον δὲ προσιτίον ἀυτῇ τὴν ἐκλογικίαν τῆς θείας διδασκαλίας θεωρούμενοι. *Est autem valde dialectice ad legem accedendum consequentiam* (i. e. the recondite

rests of Christianity. For, not content with thus perverting and straining the Holy Scrip-
tures

C E N T.
II.

The practice arises of expounding Christian tenets upon philosophical principles. The secret discipline.

dite and abstruse senses of the law,) *divine doctrine venantibus*. The tendency of these maxims, and how greatly they lean in favour of specious and philosophical explanations of the law, must be manifest to every one. Clement also agrees with Philo Judæus in the opinion that the Greek philosophers derived all their principles from Moses. Vid. *Stromat.* lib. ii. cap. v. p. 439. Whatever therefore appears to him just and consonant to reason in the maxims or tenets of the philosophers, he is sure to discover laid down somewhere or other in the books of the Old Testament; and this leads him, not unfrequently, to strain and distort in a most extraordinary manner, the words of Moses and the other sacred writers, in order to make them, apparently, speak one and the same language with Plato and the rest of the philosophers of Greece. One point which he, in particular, seeks to establish is, that a Christian ought to cultivate philosophy and the liberal arts before he devotes himself wholly to the study of divine wisdom. The reader will, in all probability, feel his curiosity somewhat awakened on learning that this is to be proved from the history of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, as given by Moses. Clement's manner of doing it is this: (*Stromat.* lib. i. p. 333.) Abraham, he asserts, to be the image of a perfect Christian; Sarah the image of Christian wisdom; and Hagar the image of philosophy or human wisdom. Abraham lived with Sarah, for a long time, in a state of connubial sterility. The inference from this, according to Clement, is, that a Christian, as long as he confines himself to the study of divine wisdom and religion alone, will never bring forth any great or excellent fruits. Abraham, then, with the consent of Sarah, takes to him Hagar; which proves, according to Clement, that a Christian ought to embrace the wisdom of this world or philosophy, and that Sarah or divine wisdom will not withhold her consent. Lastly, Abraham, after Hagar had borne him Ismael, resumed his intercourse with Sarah, and of her begat Isaac: of this the import is, that a Christian, after having once thoroughly grounded himself in human learning and philosophy, will, if he then devotes himself to the culture of divine wisdom, be capable of propagating the race of true Christians, and of rendering essential service to the church. Plato and his disciples maintained that the world was two-fold; the one *intellectual*,

or

C E N T.
II.

The practice arises of expounding Christian tenets upon philosophical principles. The secret discipline.

tures in support of such philosophical tenets as they deemed just and reasonable, the Christians of

or only to be perceived mentally and by reason, the other *visible* or an object of the senses. This maxim met with the approbation of Clement: hence he is led to contend, that Plato derived this idea of a two-fold world from Moses, and that it is to be supported on the authority of holy writ. The *intellectual* world, or that which is imperceptible to the senses, he finds alluded to in the first words of *Genesis*, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; but the earth was (*ἀβρατος*) invisible." And in the following words, "And God said, let there be light," &c. he, with equal facility, discovers that a reference was intended to the *visible* or corporeal world, *Stromat.* lib. v. p. 702. et seq. This absurd art of perverting and straining the Holy Scriptures did not, however, originate with the præfects of the catechetical school of Alexandria, but was derived by them from the celebrated Alexandrian Jew, Philo. Clement's devotion to this writer is unbounded; him he is continually extolling, him he imitates, and from him he transcribes a variety of passages without even the changing of a word. Nor did Origen in the succeeding century, or those who followed him, act otherwise. It is not, therefore, Origen who ought to be termed the parent of allegories amongst the Christians, but Philo. Indeed this has been already very justly remarked by Photius, who observes, (in *Biblioth.* cod. cv. p. 278.) Ἐξ ἧ οἶμαι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀλληγορικὸς τῆς γραφῆς ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ λόγος ἔσχεν ἀρχὴν εἰσευθῆναι. *Et vero ab hoc arbitror omnem allegoricum Sacra Scriptura sermonem in ecclesiam promanasse.* This indeed is not altogether true, since many of the Jews, and in particular the Pharisees and Essenes, had indulged much in allegories before the time of Philo; but of this there can be no doubt, that the præfects of the Alexandrian school caught the idea of interpreting Scripture upon philosophical principles, or of eliciting philosophical maxims from the sacred writers by means of allegory, from Philo, and that by them it was gradually propagated amongst the Christians at large. It is also equally certain that by the writings and example of Philo, the fondness for allegories was vastly augmented and confirmed throughout the whole Christian world: and it moreover appears, that it was he who first inspired the Christians with that degree of temerity which led them, not unfrequently, to violate the faith of history, and

of the Ammonian school, with a view to illustrate, still more clearly, the perfect accordance of human with divine wisdom, and in this way the more readily to draw over philosophers to their side, proceeded to the further length of giving to the most plain and obvious maxims and precepts of the gospel such an exposition as might render them apparently consistent with the philosophical notions and opinions which they had so unfortunately been led to espouse [g]. In their manner of doing this, however, a greater degree of caution and prudence

C E N T.
II.

The practice arises of expounding Christian tenets upon philosophical principles. The secret discipline.

and wilfully to close their eyes against the obvious and proper sense of terms and words. The examples of this most presumptuous boldness that occur in the writings of Philo are indeed but rare: particular instances of it, however, are not wanting; as may easily be shewn from Origen and others who took him for their guide, and who, manifestly, considered a great part both of the Old and New Testament as not exhibiting a representation of things that really occurred, but merely the images of moral actions. If the reader will give himself the trouble to refer to Philo *de Allegoricis Legis*, lib. iii. p. 134. he will find in the turn that is there given to the history of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, an instance which may serve to convince him that this celebrated Jew made no scruple of perverting, and even absolutely reversing the truth of sacred history whenever occasion might appear to demand it.

[g] Whatever, for instance, is to be met with in Scripture respecting God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, was so expounded by these Christians as to render it consistent with the doctrine of three hypostases or natures in God as maintained by Plato, Parmenides, and others. Clement. *Stromat.* lib. v. p. 710. Again, what is said by the sacred writers respecting the future destruction and burning of the world, was so explained by them as to make it accord with what was taught by Plato and the Stoics respecting the purification and renovation of the world by fire. Vid. Clement *Stromat.* lib. v. p. 647. 211. & seq. The restoration or resurrection of the dead was so interpreted as to accommodate it to the tenets of the Grecian

C E N T.

II.

The practice
arises of ex-
pounding
Christian te-
nets upon
philosophi-
cal princi-
ples.
The secret
discipline.

dence was observed by some than by others. By not a few the expositions of the Christian mysteries, which their ingenuity had thus suggested were promulgated without reserve, and endeavours used to get them adopted by the church, as appears from the disputes that took place with Praxeas, Theodotus, Hermogenes, and Artemon. But by far the greater part, pursuing the example of the Egyptian teachers, appear to have wished, that the principles of Christianity should be unfolded and explained to the people at large, with every possible degree of plainness and simplicity, and that the more abstruse and philosophic interpretation of them should never reach the ears of the multitude, but be made known only to certain select persons of tried faith and a cultivated understanding; and not even to these through the medium of writing, but merely by word of mouth. Hence arose that more secret and sublime theology of the ancient Christians to which we have of late been accustomed to refer under the title of *Disciplina Arcani* [b], and which Clement of Alexandria styles *γνωσις* or *knowledge*,

sages. The different passages in holy writ that relate to the illuminating, purifying, and regenerating of the mind were, with great ingenuity, made to correspond with what was taught by most of the Egyptian and Platonic philosophers of the ancient as well as modern school respecting the philosophical death, or the separation of the rational soul from the sensitive one, and also from the influence of the body. In fact there are but few points of Christian theology, which the teachers who were inflamed with this eager desire to produce an union between Christianity and philosophy, left untouched.

[b] That the more learned of the Christians, subsequently to the second century, cultivated, in secret, an abstruse discipline of a different nature from that which they taught

ledge, but which differs from what is called *Mystical Theology*, only in name [i].

CENT.
II.

XXXV. As The secret discipline.

[i] The secret discipline was of a more comprehensive nature than the mystical theology, inasmuch as it embraced the whole of the philosophical theology that sprung up in Egypt in the second century, and gradually found its way from thence to other nations. What we find termed mystical theology appears to have comprised the best and noblest part of this secret discipline; I mean that which respects life and morals, the purifying of the soul, and exalting it above every object of sense. For it is well known, that the true and genuine Mystics adopted, as the very basis and ground-work of their discipline, those principles respecting the Deity, the world, the soul, and the nature of man, which the Christians had borrowed from the Egyptian and Modern Platonic philosophy, and were accustomed, from this century downwards, to communicate merely to a select number of auditors.

taught publicly, is well known to every one. Concerning the argument, however, or matter of this secret or mysterious discipline, its origin, and the causes which gave rise to it, there are infinite disputes. But these contentions, as is commonly the case amongst mortals, instead of elucidating, have rather tended to throw additional obscurity over a thing, of itself sufficiently intricate, and that seems, as it were, to have set illustration at defiance. This has more particularly been the case since the advocates for the Papacy have endeavoured to avail themselves of this secret discipline of the ancient Christians in support of their cause. To me it appears, that this obscurity might be in part removed if due attention were paid to a circumstance which seems to have been hitherto commonly overlooked, namely, that amongst the ancient Christians, there existed, not merely one, but several species of secret discipline, which were indeed of some affinity to each other, but between which it is necessary in regard to this question to draw a line of distinction, in order to prevent our confounding together things in themselves really different. In the first place, there was a sort of secret or mysterious discipline that related to those who were enemies to the Christian religion and worshippers of false gods: but even this was of more than one kind. For first, there was a sort of discipline of this nature that re-

C E N T.
II.Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two fold
character.

XXXV. As the love of philosophy originated amongst the Christians a two-fold interpretation

spected all who were adverse to the Christian faith generally and without distinction. There were certain points of belief, for instance, at this time current amongst the Christians respecting the destruction that hung over the city of Rome and the empire, as well as the wars and final discomfiture of Antichrist, the near approach of the end of the world, the millenium, and other matters, peradventure connected with these. Now if things of this kind had been promulgated without reserve amongst the multitude, there can be no doubt but that a very considerable degree of enmity and ill-will would have been excited in the minds of the Roman people towards the Christians. Great care was therefore taken to conceal every thing of this nature from all except comparatively a few, of whose fidelity and secrecy there could be no apprehension. Wherefore, when Montanus and his followers, in this very century, publicly prophesied the downfall of the city and empire of Rome, it proved highly displeasing to the Christians, and they at once withdrew themselves from every sort of connection with a man who could be guilty of such imprudence. *Hoc solum*, says Tertullian, (in his *Vindiciæ Montani* which are lost, but of which this passage is preserved *apud Prædestinat.* a Jac. Sirmond. edit. lib. i. Hæres. xxvi. p. 30.) *hoc solum discrepamus* (the Montanists from other Christians) *quod secundas nuptias non recipimus et prophetiam Montani de futuro judicio non recusamus*. Now, as to the future general judgment, all Christians believed in it, and there could, therefore, have been no occasion for Montanus to prophesy any thing at all about it. By *futurum judicium* in the above passage, therefore, we must understand the judgment which this man had inadvertently prophesied as awaiting the Roman empire in particular; and against this prophesy the Christians deemed it prudent to protest, lest the enmity of the Roman emperors and people, of which they had already sufficiently felt the weight, should be still further excited against them. Another species of secret discipline had relation to those whom the Christians were desirous of rescuing from the dominion of superstition and initiating in the principles of Christianity. With these they found it necessary to proceed somewhat cautiously, lest, by a premature communication of the truth, their minds might receive impressions unfavourable to the Christian religion. They, therefore, observed at the first a total silence with regard

tion of those principles by which the intellect is instructed in the way of salvation, the one public

C E N T.
II.

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

regard to the doctrine contained in the Scripture respecting the person, merits, and functions of Christ; as well as those other mysteries, to the right comprehending of which the human mind is of itself unequal, and confined themselves wholly to such things as right reason points out concerning the Deity, the nature of man, and his duties. When these had been sufficiently inculcated and suitably received, and not before, they proceeded to points of a higher and more abstruse nature. Respecting the practice of the early Christians in regard to this, the reader will find a notable passage in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, lib. iii. cap. v. *Patrum Apostolic.* tom. i. p. 280, 281. In either of these species of secret discipline there should seem to have been nothing at which any one of an impartial and well-informed mind can take any serious offence. Entirely distinct from these there existed another species of secret discipline, which regarded Christians alone, and had respect, in part, to the catechumens, or those who had not as yet been received into the church, and in part to the regular members of the church. This discipline, so far as it regarded the catechumens, is sufficiently known. The catechumens were not admitted either to the common prayers, or to a sight of the celebration of the sacred rites ordained by Christ, or to what were termed the feasts of love; nor were they at all instructed as to the nature of these parts of divine worship, or any of the injunctions or regulations appertaining to them, until they had been regularly adopted as members of the church by baptism; and, consistently with this, the sacred preachers made it a rule to abstain from entering into any discussions immediately relating either to baptism or the Lord's supper, in presence of the catechumens. But this kind of discipline had certainly in it somewhat of an alien cast, and betrayed an imitation of foreign manners and customs but little laudable. Of a much more praise-worthy nature was the practice of consulting the furtherance and advantage of weak and illiterate Christians, by directing the teachers to accommodate their discourses to the capacities of their hearers, and in popular addresses to omit all such things as were not, without difficulty, to be comprehended by persons of low and simple minds. Instructions to this effect are to be found in Origen *contra Celsum*, lib. iii. p. 143. edit. Spencer. as well as in other Christian writers. Undoubt-

C E N T. public, and accommodated to vulgar minds, the
 II. other secret, and intelligible only to capacities
 of

Moral theo-
 logy assumes
 a two-fold
 character.

edly nothing can be more commendable and wise than to avoid troubling weak and simple minds with things, to the right comprehension of which an ordinary degree of intelligence is by no means equal. In addition to all these different species of secret discipline, which had relation to particular classes of men, and were regulated by certain modes and times, there remains still yet another to be mentioned, of a nature altogether different, being controuled neither by time nor place, and having respect to no class of men in particular, but, with a few exceptions, equally regarding all, as well Christians as those who were strangers to the Christian faith. This, without question, consisted of divers maxims and opinions which were cherished by the Christian teachers in private amongst themselves, and never communicated to the people at large, or even to their own immediate disciples indiscriminately, but only in secret to such of these latter as had given satisfactory proofs of their trust-worthiness and taciturnity. Clement of Alexandria is the first writer that notices this sort of discipline: before him no mention whatever is made of it by any author. There can, therefore, be but little doubt but that it originated amongst the Christians of Egypt, and was, by them, communicated to the other churches. Clement represents this secret discipline, to which he gives the title of *γνωσις*, as having been instituted by Christ himself. From a passage in his *Hypotyposes*, a work long since lost, which is cited by Eusebius in *Eccles. Histor.* lib. ii. cap. i. p. 38. it appears that he considered this *γνωσις*, or gift of knowledge, as having been conferred by our Lord, after his resurrection, on James the Just, John, and Peter, by whom it was communicated to the other apostles; and that, by these, this treasure was committed to the seventy disciples, of whom Barnabas was one. A similar passage to this occurs in his *Stromata*, lib. i. p. 322. in which, however, to the three apostles enumerated by Eusebius, he adds a fourth, namely, Paul, whom he also conceives to have been instructed in this secret discipline by Christ himself. Nor does he discover the least hesitation in asserting, with the Gnostics, that the discipline communicated by our Blessed Saviour to mankind was of a two-fold nature, the one calculated for the world at large, the other designed only for the wise and prudent; the former consist-

ing

of the higher order; so likewise did it occasion a two-fold form to be assumed by that wisdom which,

C E N T.
II.

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

ing of what was taught publicly to the people by Christ himself, and is to be found in the Scriptures, the latter, of certain maxims and precepts that were communicated merely by word of mouth, to a few only of the apostles. Ὁυ πολλοῖς ἀπεκάλυψεν ἅ μὴ πολλῶν ἦν, ὀλίγοις δὲ οἷς προσήκειν ἠπίστατο, τοῖς οἷοις τε ἐκδέξασθαι, καὶ τυπωθῆναι πρὸς αὐτά. *Non revelavit (Christus) multis ea quæ non erant multorum, set paucis quibus sciebat convenire, qui et ea possent accipere et ex eis informari. Stromat. lib. i. cap. i. p. 323.* Clement makes it a matter of boast that the secret discipline thus instituted by Christ was familiar to those who had been his masters and preceptors, whom he very lavishly extolls, and seems to exult not a little in having, under their tuition, enjoyed the advantage of being instructed in it himself. A part of it, indeed, he says, had, through length of time, escaped his memory, but that the rest of it remained still fresh in his mind. He promises, moreover, that he would advert to some of the chief or leading points of this venerable knowledge in his *Stromata*, but represents himself as bound not openly to make known or explain the whole of it, lest, according to the proverb, he should put a sword in the hand of a child. Τὰ μὲν ἐκὼν παραπέμπομαι, says he, p. 324. ἐκλέγων ἐπιστημόνως, φοβούμενος γράφειν, ἃ καὶ λέγειν ἐφυλαξάμεν. *Nonnulla quidem consulto prætermitto, scienter delictum faciens, timens scribere, quæ etiam cavi dicere.* In another place, viz. p. 327. he says, Στωματεῖς κρυπτεῖν ἐντέχνως τὰ τῆς γνώσεως βέλονται σπέρματα. *Libri mei Stromatum volunt artificiose celare semina cognitionis.* To any one who might be at a loss to account for his declining to make publicly known, and in a great measure altogether concealing, a species of knowledge, confessedly of the highest importance and value, he replies (cap. iii. p. 328.) that it was not to be comprehended, except by minds that had been thoroughly purged and delivered from the dominion of the passions, that there would, moreover, be a danger in it, lest occasion might be given to contentious persons for cavilling and insult. Ὅτι μέγας ὁ κίνδυνος τὸν ἀπορρήτον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῆς ὄντως φιλοσοφίας λόγον ἐξορχίσασθαι τοῖς ἀφειδῶς πάντα μὲν ἀντιλέγειν ἐθέλουσιν ἕκ ἐν δίκῃ, πάντα δὲ ὀνόματα καὶ ῥήματα ἀπορρίπτουσιν ἑδαμῶς κοσμίως. *Quia magnum est periculum vere arcanam veræ philosophiæ rationem iis propalare, qui profuse quidem ac petulanter, sed non jure, volunt contra omnes dicere, omnia autem nomina et verba*

CENT
II.

Moral theology assume a two-fold character.

which, in a more particular manner, respects life and morals; the one suited to the multitude,

turpiter ac indecore ejaculantur. See also lib. ii. p. 432. & seq. Many other passages of this kind are to be met with in Clement by any one who will be at the trouble of diligently exploring his *Stromata*. What those maxims and principles were which Clement conceived himself to be precluded from communicating to the world at large, cannot long remain a secret to any diligent and attentive reader of his works. There cannot be the smallest question but that they were philosophical explications of the Christian tenets respecting the Trinity, the soul, the world, the future resurrection of the body, Christ, the life to come, and other things of a like abstruse nature, which had in them somewhat that admitted of being expounded upon philosophical principles. They also, no doubt, consisted of certain mystical and allegorical interpretations of the divine oracles, calculated to support those philosophical expositions of the Christian principles, and tenets. For since, as we have above seen, he expressly intimates that he would in his *Stromata* unfold a part of that secret wisdom which was designed only for the few, but that in doing this he would not so far throw off all reserve as to render himself universally intelligible; and since we find him, in the course of the above-mentioned work, continually giving to the more excellent and important truths contained in the sacred volume, such an interpretation as tends to open a wide field for conjecture, and also comparing, not openly but in a concise and half obscure way, the Christian tenets with the maxims of the philosophers, I am willing to resign every pretension to penetration if it be not clearly to be perceived of what nature that sublime knowledge respecting divine matters must have been, of which he makes such a mystery. Nor was there any other species of secret knowledge besides this possessed by his principal disciple Origen, who, although he was anxious to make the Christian religion conform itself, in almost every respect, to the rule of his philosophy, had yet the wisdom to propound his opinions with prudence and caution, and to avoid a full and explicit discovery of them. What Clement says respecting the divine origin of this discipline is, unquestionably, a mere fiction, devised, either by him or some other admirer of philosophy, with a view to silence the importunate remonstrances of those friends to Christian

tude, who incline to society and suffer themselves to be involved in the cares and concerns

C E N T.
II.

Of } More theology assumes a two-fold character.

Christian simplicity who, mindful of St. Paul's injunction, were continually protesting against any attempt to blend philosophy with the religion of the gospel. To Clement, such sanctified deceptions and pious inventions appeared not at all unwarrantable; indeed there can be no doubt, but that they were countenanced by all such of the Christian teachers as were of the Egyptian or Modern Platonic school. Why James, and John, and Peter should have been, in particular, fixed upon as the apostles whom Christ selected as the most worthy of having this recondite wisdom communicated to them by word of mouth, is very easily to be perceived. For these were the three disciples whom our Blessed Saviour took apart with him up into the mountain when he was about to be transfigured, Matt. xvii. 1. Luke ix. 28. To represent them therefore as having in a peculiar manner been favoured with an insight into all mysteries appeared to be but consistent and proper. In reality there can be no doubt but that Clement, and most probably also his masters, whose authority he frequently adduces, learnt the mode of blending philosophy with religion from Philo; and the secret discipline, or the practice of cautiously concealing their philosophical explications of the Scriptures and the principles of Christianity, from the Egyptians as well as from Philo. The thing, in fact, is not altogether dissembled by Clement, who frequently compares his secret discipline with the heathen mysteries and the interior and recondite wisdom of the philosophers, and defends it by a reference to both of these. But the matter must be clear, beyond a question, to any one who shall peruse the writings of Philo with attention; since he in many places equally extols the secret discipline, and, for the most part, speaks of it in the same terms, and defends it by the same reasons and arguments as Clement. Nor is the recondite discipline of Philo of a different nature from Clement's; on the contrary it corresponds with it in every respect. Vid. Philo, in lib. *de Cherubim*, p. 144, 145. *de Sacrificiis*, p. 139. lib. *de Plantatione Noë*, p. 231. et passim. Being, in lib. iii. *Allegor. Legum*, p. 131. about to give an explication of the words of Sarah, in *Genesis*, xxi. 6. "God hath made me to laugh," he thus bespeaks the attention of those who were initiated in the secret discipline, Ἀναπιτάσωντες τὰ ὄρα, οἱ μύσαι, παραδέξασθε τὴν ἐσχάτην ἰερωτάτην. *Itaque quotquot estis initiati,*

C E N T.
II.Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

of this life; the other calculated for such as, aspiring after a higher degree of sanctity, and a more

itati, expansis auribus accipite mysteria sacratissima. After this preamble he presents the reader with a philosophical explication of these words of Sarah, which cannot be said to be altogether an obscure one, but, at the same time, it is by no means clear or perspicuous: in short you may plainly perceive that what he aims at is, not to make himself understood generally, but only by such as had been initiated in the secret discipline or philosophical religion. In this he is imitated exactly by Clement in lib. *de Cherubim*, p. 146, 147. edit. Anglic. p. 115. ed. Paris, where he undertakes to explain, from the Mosaic history, the manner in which virtue is generated, and how, of itself, it generates other virtues. For first of all he thus gravely repulses the profane: Ἀκοῆς ἐπιφραζάτωσαν δεισιδύμονες τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἢ μεταστήτωσαν. *Superstitiosi vel discedant vel obturent aures suas.* Τελετὰς γὰρ ἀναδιδάσχομεν θείας τῶς τελετῶν ἀξίως τῶν ἱερωτάτων μυστῶν, *divina enim mysteria tradimus his, qui talibus sacris digne initiati sunt.* — Ἐκείνους δὲ ἐκ ἱεροφάντησομεν κατεσχημένοις ἀνάτω κακῆ, τῷ φωνημάτων καὶ ὀνομάτων γλισχρότητι, καὶ τερθρείαις ἐδῶν. *Illos autem haudquaquam ad hæc sacra admittimus, qui tenentur morbo insanabili, fastu verborum et nominum fuco, et morum prestigiis.* Numerous passages similar to these are to be found in Clement. The explication and demonstration drawn from Moses, to which this pompous exordium is a prelude, is indeed, upon the whole, not unintelligible; its entire force and signification, however, is not to be comprehended except by the initiated in the mysteries of the Philonian philosophy; and to all such a very earnest and particular injunction is addressed by Philo at the conclusion of his Institutes, requiring them on no account to make the vulgar partakers of their knowledge. It will be enough for me to give merely a translation of his words. “Having then, O ye initiated! through the channel of purified organs, acquired a knowledge of these things, let them sink deep into your minds as holy mysteries, not to be revealed to the profane. Bury them within your bosoms, and preserve them there as a treasure; a treasure consisting, not of corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but of the fairest and most valuable portion of true wealth, namely, a knowledge of God and of virtue, and of the offspring that is generated of them both. Whenever ye chance to meet with any one else of the initiated, beseech him with the most earnest

a more intimate communion with the Deity, turn their backs on the business, noise, and bustle

C E N T.
II.

of

Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

earnest intreaties not to conceal from you any mystery that he may have more recently discovered, and leave him not until you shall have obtained from him the most intimate insight into it." In his book *de Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, p. 173. tom. i. opp. he with astonishing subtilty deduces from *Gen. xviii. 6.* where Sarah is said have "made ready quickly three measures of fine meal, and baked cakes thereof upon the hearth," a support for the principle which he frequently takes occasion to inculcate of the existence of three powers in the Deity; and having done so, he here likewise, by way of conclusion, makes a point of remarking that neither this nor any other mystery ought to be generally made known: *μηδὲν προχέρον; εὐλαλή τὰ θεῶν μυστήρια, ταμιευμένη ὅαυτὰ καὶ ἐχεμυδῶσαι ἐν ἀπορήτῳ συλάττει.* *Anima divina mysteria nemini proloquatur facile; sed servans ea recondita reticeat et in secreto servet.* No detriment, I am persuaded, can ensue from my declining to notice at large the remarks on this and similar passages that have been published by Thomas Mangey, the late editor of Philo, since they afford but little assistance to a reader who is desirous of penetrating into the causes and reason of things. It may however be worthy of notice in this place that Philo makes the principle of the existence of three powers in the Deity, concerning which there has been amongst men of the first eminence such a diversity of opinion and conjecture, a part of the secret discipline. Hence it is that we never find him either openly propounding or attempting any explication of it, but on the contrary always speaking of it in such ambiguous terms as serve only to involve it in obscurity. Nor does he at all times observe one and the same mode in treating of it, but pursues a very different method in some places from what he does in others. In regard to this, see what I have said in my notes on Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, tom. i. p. 640. as well as what has been most learnedly remarked both in respect to this and other passages of Philo by that eminent scholar and most successful emulator of illustrious predecessors, Jo. Bened. Carpzovius, in his *Exercitationes in Epist. ad Hebræos ex Philone Prolegom.* p. cxxxv. & seq. In my opinion therefore it must ever prove a mere waste of time and pains to attempt any explication of the trinity of Philo, or to ascertain in particular his notions respecting the nature

CENT.

II.

Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

of the world. It is true, indeed, that even at an early period, when the Christians were as yet

nature of what he terms the *Logos* or *Word*. The wary Jew is particularly cautious of committing himself with regard to these things, and evidently wishes to excite rather than to gratify a thirst for a more intimate insight into them. I speak from experience; no interpretation that can be devised or thought of is readily to be reconciled with all the different passages respecting these mysteries, that occur in his works; indeed such is the discordance of these passages, that they appear even totally repugnant to each other. In this way, it was but besitting for a man to proceed when treating of the secret or mysterious discipline. "Αδεται, says he, in his book *de Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini*, tom. i. p. 189. where with a very cautious and delicate hand he touches on some of its leading points, "Αδεται δὲ τις καὶ τοῦ ἔτος ὡς ἐν ἀπορήτοις λόγος, ὃν ἀκοῶν πρῶτον παρακαλίτῃσαι χρὴ νεωτέρων ὡτα ἐπιφράξαντας. *Celebratur et alia, quæ tamen ad mysteria, (i. e. the secret discipline) pertinet sententia, deponenda penes aures seniorum, obturatis juniorum auribus.* On the present occasion I cannot but feel that it would be wrong in me to detain the reader with what else might be adduced from Philo on this subject: a word or two more, therefore, and I have done. Philo, without doubt, imitated the Egyptians; Clement, as unquestionably, followed the example of Philo; and Origen trod clearly in the footsteps of both. The more recent Christian teachers, for the most part, formed themselves upon the model of this latter father. The secret discipline of Philo consisted in the application of philosophic principles to religion and the sacred writings; nor was that of Clement ever thought to differ from it, except by those who had not sufficiently informed themselves on the subject. The reader will understand me in what I have said above as not meaning to attribute the absolute invention of this discipline to Philo: for we know that long before his time it had been the practice of several Jews to expound and illustrate Moses from the writings of Plato and other Greek philosophers: but of this, I think, there can be no doubt, that Clement and the other Egyptian teachers by whom this discipline was first introduced into the Christian church, were indebted for their acquaintance with it entirely to Philo. Wonderful, indeed, is it to contemplate the influence and authority which this Alexandrian Jew had at one time acquired amongst the Christians.

We

yet strangers to philosophy, there were to be found amongst them persons who, by abstaining from those things which gratify the senses, such as marriage, flesh, wine, and the more solid kinds of food, and by neglecting every culture or attention to the body, sought to disengage and purify their minds from all inordinate desires and affections, and thus to consecrate themselves entirely to God [k]: but upon the introduction of the Egyptian and Platonic philosophy,

C E N T.
II.

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

We may even go the length of saying that, without Philo, the writings of those whom we term "the Fathers" would in many respects be frequently altogether unintelligible.

[k] That amongst the most early Christians there were some who professed a more strict and severe course of life than others, and not only debarred themselves of lawful gratifications and indulgences, but also broke down the strength and vigour of their animal frame by frequent fastings and other rigorous practices, is placed out of all doubt by numerous testimonies. It is also well known that these persons were commonly termed "Ascetics," from the verb *ασκειν*, which means to train or prepare one's self for a combat. See, amongst many other authorities, Deyling, *Exerc. de Ascetis Veterum*, subjoined to the third book of his *Observationes Sacre*; and Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, vol. iii. p. 3. & seq. What gave rise to this sort of people, and at what time they first made their appearance, is not equally clear. To me it appears that those Ascetics (for they were not at all of one and the same description, neither did they all observe the same rules) I say, it strikes me that those Ascetics who declined marriage and preferred a life of celibacy, without, however, rejecting any other of the comforts and conveniences of life, must have been the most ancient of any; and that persons of this description were to be found even in the very infancy of Christianity. For we know that what is said by Christ himself in *Matt. xix. 12.* respecting those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, as well as what St. Paul says in *1 Corinth. vii. 7. 25. & seq. 38.* respecting the preference due to celibacy, was by most so understood from the first as to cause it generally to be believed that unmarried persons were happier, more

C E N T.
II.Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

philosophy this simple mode of life was reduced into the form of an art, and interwoven with such

perfect, and more acceptable to God than others. Hence there was always to be found amongst the Christians no small number of persons who deemed it expedient to avoid marriage. Let us hear the celebrated Christian philosopher of this century, Athenagoras, in *Apolog. pro Christianis*, cap. xxviii. p. 129. ed. Oxon. "Ευροι; δ' ἂν πολλὰς τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ ἀνδρας καὶ γυναικας καταγηράσκοντα ἀγάμους, ἐλπιδι τῷ μᾶλλον συνέσεισθαι τῷ θεῷ. *Invenias autem multos ex nostris in utroque sexu, qui in calibatu consenescant, quod ita Deo se conjundiores futuros sperent.* And to the same purport Tertullian, *de Cultu Feminarum*. lib. ii. p. 179 cap. ix. ed. Rigalt. *Non enim et nulli ita faciunt, et se spadonatu obsignant propter regnum Dei tam fortem et, utique permiffam voluptatem sponte ponentes?* Those Ascetics, who either abstained from flesh and wine, or else mortified their bodies by frequent fastings, or devoted themselves to a course of severe and laborious discipline, by way of countenancing all vicious propensities and perturbations of the mind, are, unquestionably, of more recent origin, and cannot, I think, be placed higher than the age of which we are now treating. On these also we find commendation bestowed by the writers of this century; but they are always placed beneath those who were emphatically termed ἐγκρατεῖς "the continent," in opposition to the "incontinent;" that is, they are always placed after those who had renounced marriage. *Quid enim*, says Tertullian, (*de velandis Virginibus*, cap. iii. p. 194.) *si et incoutinentes dicant se a continentibus scandalizari (i. e. supposing those who are married should complain of being scandalized by those who have professed celibacy) continentia revocanda est?* add to which what is to be found in Du Fresne's *Glossary*, tom. ii. p. 1020. sub voc. *Continentes*. Without doubt we may conclude that Christ himself and St. Paul were considered as having expressly recommended celibacy, but that with regard to an abstinence from flesh and wine, fastings and the like, they had left behind them no particular injunctions: that the latter, therefore, although perhaps in themselves both proper and laudable, were nevertheless regarded as of merely human institution, whilst the former appeared to possess the character of a divine recommendation. Tertullian in one part of his treatise *de Cultu Faminarum*, lib. ii. cap. ix. p. 179. makes mention of both these species of Ascetics, but

such maxims respecting the Deity, the human soul, and the nature of man, as were thought most

C E N T.
II.

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

but in such a way as plainly to shew that in point of dignity and sanctity, he gave a decided preference to the continent, or those whom he terms "Voluntary Eunuchs." For after having spoken of these latter, he goes on thus;—*Numquid non aliqui ipsam Dei creaturam sibi interdicunt, abstinentes vino et animalibus esculentis, quorum fructus nulli periculo aut sollicitudini adjacent, sed humilitatem animæ suæ in victus quoque castigatione Deo immolant?* To any one who will duly weigh the force of these words, and compare them with what goes before, it cannot fail to be apparent that Tertullian was far from placing the Abstinent on a level with the Continent, or those who renounced marriage. The opinion, pretty generally entertained by the learned, that these Ascetics of the early ages were accustomed to distinguish themselves from other Christians by their dress, and that in particular, by way of pointing themselves out as philosophers, they adopted the mantle or cloak, appears to me to require the support of stronger and more positive testimony than any one has hitherto been able to adduce in its favour. I am ready to allow indeed that such of them as made pretensions to a greater degree of strictness either in point of continence or abstinence, might affect to make this known by the quality or colour of their garb: But that the Ascetics of the early ages, as a body of men, distinguished themselves by any peculiar dress, or that the philosopher's cloak or mantle, in particular, was ever considered as appropriate to them, is what I cannot, by any means, bring myself to believe. The testimonies that are usually brought forward in support of the above opinion are either of more recent date than the first three centuries, or else relate merely to those philosophers who, notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity, retained their pristine garb, that is, the mantle or cloak: of which practice the reader will recollect me to have noticed some examples a few pages back. And I really must enter my protest against any such unwarrantable deduction as this,—that because those who were philosophers before they embraced the Christian faith, remained so still notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity, and continued as before to invest themselves with a cloak or mantle by way of distinction, it is incumbent on us to believe that all the Christian Ascetics assumed this cloak or philosophical dress likewise. If, however, some certain individuals

C E N T.

II.

Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

most consonant to reason. All such Christians, for instance, as aspired to a degree of sanctity beyond the vulgar, were enjoined by means of contemplation, sobriety, continence, mortifications of the body, solitude, and the like, to separate, as far as possible, that soul which was the offspring of the eternal reason of the Deity, from the sensitive soul, as well as from every sort of bodily influence, so that they might, even in this life, be united to and enjoy the most intimate communion with the Supreme Parent of souls, and upon the dissolution of the body, their minds being thoroughly disencumbered of every fordid and debasing tie, might regain, without impediment, their proper stations in the regions above. To this source is to be ascribed the rise of the Mystics, a denomination of men that first made their appearance amongst the philosophising Christians of Egypt in the course of this century, and gradually spread themselves throughout the Christian church [1]. Hither also

individuls of the Ascetics, by way of manifesting to the world the kind of life to which they had devoted themselves, did actually assume the philosophic cloak, which I beg to be understood as by no means intending to deny, there cannot be a doubt but that they did so purely out of imitation of the heathen sages, and by way of pointing out to the Greeks and Romans, that amongst the Christians also were to be found philosophers.

[1] It was not until long after the light of Christianity had risen on the world that the terms "mystical theology" and "Mystics" were ever heard of. The things themselves, however, to which these names came afterwards to be applied, are by far more ancient than the Christian church. Long antecedent to the coming of Christ there were to be found, not only amongst the Egyptians but also amongst the Jews, who copied after the Egyptians, (as is placed out of all question by the Essenes and Therapeutæ) as well as in other nations, certain persons who made it their study,

also may we refer the origin of Monks, Hermits, and Cœnobites, whose rules and institutions

CENT.
II.

are Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

Study, by means of fasting, labour, contemplation, and other afflictive exercises, to deliver their rational souls, which they considered as the offspring of the Deity unhappily confined within corporeal prisons, from the bonds of the flesh and the senses, and to restore them to an uninterrupted communion with their God and parent. This discipline arose out of that ancient philosophy of the Egyptians, which considered all things as having proceeded from God, and regarded the rational souls of the human race as more noble particles of the divine nature. When the Modern Platonic school made that philosophy, in a certain degree, its own, its disciples were also incited to the adoption of this system of bodily mortification. Neither, as has long since been remarked, is there any other tendency in what is laid down by Plato himself respecting the origin of minds, and of their fall into earthly bodies. Philo, whom we have already so often cited, will here again furnish us with considerable light. The tenets of this very celebrated Jew (whose opinions were for a while held in much more esteem than they deserved by the Christians,) respecting the soul, were in fact a compound or medley of the Egyptian, Platonic, and Mosaic principles. In the first place he lays it down that in man there are two souls; the one rational and generated of the Word, the other sensitive. *de Allegor. Legis*, lib. i. p. 51. 54. 57. tom. i. opp. The former or rational mind he regards as a portion of the Deity, that is, according to the Egyptians, a part of the most refined and supreme æther, and that conformably to the Mosaic account this had been imparted to man by the breath of God; in which it is to be remarked that he differs from Plato. Vid. *Allegor. Legis*, lib. iii. p. 119. The latter or sensitive soul he considers as impelled and animated by the divine mind, *Allegor. Legis*, lib. i. p. 51. & 54. The rational soul, according to him, is the seat of abstract notions; whilst the sensitive soul is occupied solely by the images of things that are objects of the senses. *de Mundi Opificio*, p. 41. & seq. tom. i. ed. Anglic. I pass over a variety of things which, for the most part, border too nearly on excessive refinement, and are not lain down with sufficient perspicuity. Proceeding on principles like these, he inculcates a doctrine altogether similar to that taught by the Mystics; namely, that the celestial and
rational

C E N T.
II.Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

are uniformly grounded upon the principle of delivering the immortal spirit from the oppression

rational soul should erect itself above every object of the senses, — that it should seek, by means of contemplation, to separate itself from the body, — that, mindful of its divine origin, it should be constantly aspiring to communion with its parent, and that it should endeavour, by every possible means, to undermine and weaken the power and influence of the body and the senses. To a soul once exalted above empty and corporeal things, he holds forth a promise of divine illumination, and pleasure incredible. It may not be amiss perhaps to confirm what I have thus stated by a specimen or two, in order that the votaries of mysticism may be brought acquainted with the sources from whence those principles, in which they so much delight, are drawn. Let us then hear with what pomp and poetical colouring Philo describes the ascent of the soul to God, *de Mund. Opificio*, p. 16. tom. i. opp. Ψυχὴ πᾶσαν τὴν αἰσθητὴν εἶσαν ὑπερκύβας ἐνταῦθα ἐφίηται τῆς νοητῆς καὶ ὡν εἶδεν ἐνταῦθα αἰσθητῶν, ἐν ἐκείνῃ τὰ παραδείγματα καὶ τὰς ιδέας θεασάμενος, ὑπερβάλλοντα κάλλη, μέθη νηφαλιῶν κατασχεθεὶς, ὥσπερ ἡ κορυβαντιῶντες, ἐνδυσία, ἐτέρε γεμισθεὶς ἡμέρε καὶ πόδε βελτιόνος. *Anima emergens supra omnem sensibilem essentiam demum intelligibilis desiderio corripitur*, (we have here, obviously, what is termed by the Mystics, the “purgation,” next follows their “illumination,”) *illic conspicata exemplaria, ideaeque rerum quas hic vidit sensibilem, eximias illas pulchritudines*, (a coincidence with the Platonic philosophy is here observable,) *ebriitate quadam sobria capta, tamquam Corybantes lymphatur alio plena amore longe meliore*. This high measure of felicity is crowned by a conjunction with the Parent Deity of all things. Ὅψις ἔπρος τὴν ἄκραν ἀψίδα παραπεμφθεὶς τῶν νοητῶν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἵνα δοκεῖ τὸν μέγαν βασιλεα. Γλιχομένω δ’ ἰδεῖν, θεῖα φωτὸς ἀκρατοι καὶ ἀμυγεις ἀνγαὶ χειμάρρη τρέπον ἐκχέονται, ὡς τὰς μαρμαρυγαῖς τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα σκοτοδιῖαν. *A quo ad summum fastigium adducta rerum intelligibilium, ad ipsum magnum regem videtur tendere; tum vero in videndi cupidam purissimus ac merissimus divinae lucis radius more torrentis effunditur, ita ut ad eum splendorem caliget mentis oculus*. Surely the reader will believe that he has been listening to the Coryphaeus of the Mystics, Dionysius, or to some Henry Suso, or some other similar character. In his *Allegor. Legis*, lib. i. p. 59. 60. he divides souls into two classes, “the Confessing (ἰξομολογεμένης), and “the Labouring”

pression under which it groans in being connected

C E N T.
II.

Moral theo-
logy assumes
a two-fold
character.

bouring (ἐργαζομένους). The “confessing souls” are those which, being freed from all contagion of the body, as well as divested of all cogitation and emotion, and exalted above every object of the senses, have given themselves up entirely to God, and maintain themselves in the most perfect state of quietism. Όταν γὰρ ἐκβῆ ὁ νῦς ἑαυτῆ καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἀνενίγκη Θεῷ — — — τρικᾶντα ὁμολογίαν τῆν πρὸς τὸν ὄντα ποιῆται. Now in what author, I would ask, shall we find language better agreeing with the pompous declamation of the Mystics, or more aptly coinciding with their discipline? *Quum mens extra semetipsam excefferit, Deoque seipsum obtulerit — — — tunc confessionem edit erga eum qui solus vere est.* But let us proceed: — ἕως δὲ αὐτὸν ὑποτίθηται ὡς αἰτίον τινο·, μάχραν ἀφέσκηκε τῆ παραχωρεῖν Θεῷ καὶ ὁμολογεῖν αὐτῷ. *Quamdiu vero anima se causam rei cujuspiam existimat* (that is, so long as the soul itself thinks, or reflects, or exercises a will of its own), *multum abest quin confiteatur, cedatque Deo.* But even all this is not sufficient: for he will not allow even that cessation of the soul from every kind of action or exertion, which he enjoins, and which is the object or end of the mystic life, to be the work of the soul, but will have it to be the operation of the Deity. The rational soul, he maintains, to be a portion of the Deity, and that it is therefore by the innate, or rather implanted power of God in her, that she is enabled to cast off the bonds of the flesh and the sensitive soul, and to compose herself to a state of the most perfect quietism. Καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τῆτο τὸ ἐξομολογεῖσθαι νοητέον, ὅτι ἔργον ἐστὶ ἐχθὶ τῆς ψυχῆς· ἀλλὸ τῆ φαίνοντος αὐτῆ Θεοῦ τὸ εὐχαρίσειον. *Nam et ipsa confessio debet intelligi non anima opus, sed Dei qui eam hanc gratitudinem docet.* The “labouring souls” of Philo are those which endeavour, by a constant exercise of thought, reflection, and judgment, to arrive at virtue; and strive to counteract all vicious propensities and perturbations, by means of reading, meditation, and prayer: and concerning these he subsequently discourses much at large. Let us now endeavour briefly to ascertain from his *Allegor. Legis*, lib. i. p. 64, 65. what his doctrine was respecting the body. The very perfection of true wisdom he pronounces to consist in alienating one’s self from the body and its concupiscence. Under the denomination of the body, however, he immediately gives us to understand that he means to include the senses, also,

CENT. II. nected with the body, of purifying it from the corruptions

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

of the body, nay even the very voice itself; so that he should seem to enjoin a man desirous of attaining to a state of virtue, not only to mortify the senses, but also to forego the use of his tongue and voice. *Σχεδὸν γὰρ σοφίας ἔργον τῆτ' ἐστίν, ἀλλοτριεῖσθαι πρὸς τὸ σῶμα, καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῆ εἰς ἀπολαύσιν κακίας, ἢ μόνον δεῖ πῶς ἔχειν τὸν νῦν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν αἴσθησιν, καὶ τὸν λόγον, καὶ τὸ σῶμα.* This subject is pursued by him at much length, and he cites in support of his doctrine even Moses himself, with whom he maintains that Heraclitus is in perfect unison. Lastly, he asserts, that the soul during its continuance in the body lies as it were buried in a sepulchre, and partakes in no degree of life, until after its separation from vitiated and inert matter. *Ψυχῆς ὡς ἂν ἐν σήματι τῷ σώματι ἐντετομβευμένης· εἰ δὲ ἀποθάνομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ζώσης τὸν ἰδίον βίον καὶ ἀπελλαγμένης κακῆ καὶ νεκρῆ τῆ συνδέτε σώματος.* *Anima corpori infepulta est tamquam monumento: quod si mortui fuerimus, (the soul being delivered from the body,) tum demum anima vivit vitam propriam, et a colligato sibi corpore, quod malum et mortuum est, liberatam.* In short, it would be easy for any one who might be so inclined, to collect from the writings of Philo an entire body of mystical theology, corresponding even to minuteness, with the system of Dionysius and the other Mystics of more recent times. I cannot therefore help feeling somewhat surprised that Arnold Poiret and others should, in their catalogue of mystic writers, have omitted to insert the name of this Jew, than whom, certainly, there is not a more ancient mystical author extant amongst us, and from whom, it should seem, that the philosophising Christians drew the greatest part of their mystic discipline. The principles and maxims, then, of which we have been speaking, having, in the course of this century, insinuated themselves into the minds of the Egyptian Christians, and their teachers and instructors beginning also to acquire a strong relish for the writings of Philo, there sprung up suddenly a two-fold species of piety and virtue, the one popular and public, the other mysterious and secret; as also a two-fold order of Christians, the one consisting of "Operants," or those who engaged in the labours and business of life; the other of "Quiescents," or those who endeavoured, by means of frequent meditation, corporeal mortifications, silence, solitude, debilitating of the senses, and the like, to deliver the soul
from

corruptions of sense, and of rendering it fit to be

C E N T.
II.

Moral theology assumes a two-fold character.

from the prison of the body, and unite it to the parent or fountain of all minds. Of each of these species of discipline very obvious traces are to be discovered in the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr, which have as yet, however, been adverted to but by a few, and by some even of these been wrongly interpreted. By Christ. Thomasius, for instance, an author who, on other occasions, has proved himself to be a man of erudition, as well as by some others, an accusation was, not many years back, preferred against Justin Martyr and other Christian teachers of this and the succeeding century, on the ground of their having been guilty of a most base and ridiculous sophism in maintaining that Christ, or the Word, was in all the Grecian philosophers, and more especially in Socrates, and that through this Christ, or Interior Word, these men had attained unto everlasting salvation. Vid. *Observat. Halens. Latin.* tom. ii. observ. VII. § xxx. p. 108. & seq. It is certain, however, that these persons have rather betrayed their own ignorance of ancient matters, than convicted either Justin or his associates of any thing like misrepresentation. The reasoning of Justin, according to the Platonic principles which he and other Christians of those times had been led to espouse, was perfectly correct, nor did he, as has been insinuated, by a kind of amphibology, impose either on himself or others, but cherished precisely the same opinion respecting an indwelling Christ, and an Interior Word, as is entertained by the Mystics of modern times. According to these Christian disciples of Plato and Philo Judæus, Christ is the same in God that reason is in man. Believing, therefore, as they did, that all minds or souls originally were parts of and sprung from the Logos, or Divine Reason, an opinion which they had derived partly from the Egyptians and in part from Plato, it could not but follow that they should consider Christ as dwelling in the minds of all men, and as operating and acting in all who followed the dictates of right reason. With regard to the consequences attendant on this, I have not, at present, room to enter into any discussion of them. In dismissing this subject, however, I cannot help directing the reader's attention, in a particular manner, to the wonderful influence which country and climate have on men's morals, modes of life, and opinions. The notion of all minds having sprung from God, and that they were to be brought back to a state of the most perfect quiescence in the bosom of this their first

C E N T. be admitted into the presence of the Deity in
 II. the

Moral theo-
 logy assumes
 a two-fold
 character.

great parent by means of contemplation, and corporeal mortifications, originated in regions where men's bodies are oppressed and exiccated by the solar heat, and was communicated from thence to other nations. In those countries, the immoderately fervid state of the atmosphere renders men averse to labour or action of any kind; and causes them to place their supreme felicity in rest, in contemplation, in a cessation from every kind of action of mind as well as of body. As it was impossible for them then to regard the Deity in any other light than as superlatively happy, they were naturally led to believe that God himself acted in no way whatever, but committed the government of the universe to dæmons or genii, and preserved himself in a state of perfect quiescence, ease, and contemplation. Hence proceeded those tenets of the orientals, — of God being like a light of the most pure and serene nature, — of the world and its inhabitants being committed to the care and guardianship of dæmons, — of the absolute inaction and quietism of the Supreme Being, — of the tranquil procession of all things from the Deity, without any decree or exertion on his part, and the like. So prone are mortals, in forming their notions of the Deity, to have too much respect for what passes within their own bosoms, and to make the contracted scale of their own senses a standard whereby to estimate the feelings and felicity of Omnipotence.

Again, believing as the people of those countries did, that the minds of men, like all other things, had emanated from God, and were partakers of the divine nature, it was but consentaneous that they should place the felicity of these also, and the very height of religion, in contemplation and stillness, and should both point out the way of attaining to that tranquillity, and also pronounce those to be the happiest and most like to God who secluded themselves from the society of men, and turning their backs on the concerns of this world, passed their days in a state of most sacred inaction and holy ease. These opinions, when they came to be blended with Christianity, gave rise to a multitude of solitary and gloomy characters, who were at first chiefly confined to Egypt, but whose example, inasmuch as it carried with it a great appearance of sanctity, was quickly followed by great numbers in other nations. By the inhabitants of regions

the realms of everlasting light and life [m].

C E N T.
II.

XXXVI. Religion having thus, in both its branches, the speculative as well as the practical,

Alteration in the form of divine worship.

gions where the cold strings the nerves, and invigorates men's bodies so as to give them a propensity to action and labour, a very different notion of the Deity had been formed, and consequently their conceptions of mental happiness by no means corresponded with those entertained in more genial climates. Instead of a God delighting only in quiet and repose, we here find a Deity all business and activity. Mystical theology, therefore, the offspring of a burning climate and a slothful race of mortals, found, upon its introduction into Europe from the East, an abundance of admirers and eulogists, but no very great number of disciples who exemplified its precepts in their lives. In point both of morals and institutions there was always a very material difference between our monks and mystics and those of Egypt, India, Syria, and Arabia. Men born under skies like ours, are strangers to that apathy and inertness which constitute, as it were, the very soul of the mystic discipline. Indeed of this wonderful influence of climate we are furnished with an illustration even in the provinces of Europe alone. For, confining ourselves merely to this quarter of the globe, we shall find that in districts exposed to the rays of a fervid sun the votaries and friends of Mysticism are numerous, whilst in countries of a moderate or frigid temperature there are to be met with but very few, if any.

[m] That there was a difference between the monks and the ascetics of the first ages, has of late been very generally insisted on, and in my opinion on very sufficient grounds. According to my view of the subject, there was certainly not only a difference, but a very great difference, between them. I am bound to confess, however, that it appears to me no less certain that the monks were derived from the ascetics. As long as the ascetic regimen consisted merely in continence and an abstinence from sensual gratifications and indulgences, and was unfettered by any of the precepts of the Egyptian philosophy, there was nothing to prevent men professing it from continuing in society and residing in the midst of their kindred and their families: but when that regimen assumed a different aspect, when it came to be reduced into a system, and connected with the philosophical doctrines respecting the nature of the soul, and of bodies; when the Ascetics adopted the belief, that every endeavour

C E N T.
II.Alteration in
the form of
divine wor-
ship.

cal, assumed a two-fold character, the one public or common, the other private or mysterious, it

was to be used to set free the divine spark that lay imprisoned within the body, — to subdue the influence of the senses, — to separate the mind from sense, and restore it to its first original, — to blot from it all sensual images, and repress in it every tendency to perturbation; — when they came to regard Quietism as constituting the supreme good, — when their doctrines, I say, had once assumed this character, it was but natural for them to renounce the society of men, and devote themselves to a life of seclusion and solitude. For they surely could have found nothing more difficult than, amidst the noise of worldly occupations and the frequent interruptions of friends and acquaintance, to regulate their lives according these principles, *i. e.* to purify the mind, to repress the senses, and to maintain a tranquillity unruffled by any sort of cogitation or emotion whatever. These principles, which the Ascetics in Egypt first imbibed from the mouths and writings of their teachers towards the close of this century, were by far more widely diffused in the succeeding one, owing to a love for the Egyptian, or, if the reader would rather, the Alexandrian and Ammonian philosophy becoming every day more general amongst the African and Asiatic Christians. About this period therefore we find the Ascetics beginning to withdraw themselves from cities and the society of men, and retiring into solitudes and deserts, and hence they acquired the title of “monks,” *i. e.* solitary persons. Vid. Cassian, *Collation.* xviii. cap. v. p. 517. opp. The reader will not, however, understand me as meaning to deny that there had been, even at an earlier period, some few who, by way of arriving at a higher degree of sanctity, had renounced every intercourse with men, and spent their lives in retirement and seclusion from the world: for there are many circumstances which tend to induce in us a belief that such was actually the case. But of this there can be no doubt, that until the Christians began to entertain a partiality for that pernicious species of philosophy to which we have so often adverted, it was by no means deemed necessary to forego all intercourse with the world to attain to even the very highest degrees of sanctity, and that by far the greater part of the Ascetics never did segregate themselves from the families to which they belonged. When at length the Ascetics, by way of more readily delivering the imprisoned soul from the bondage of the body

it was not long before a distinction of a similar kind took place also in the Christian discipline,

CENT.
II.

Alteration in the form of divine worship.

body and the senses, and rendering it capable of perceiving and holding communion with the Deity, were led to separate themselves from all commerce with the world, they by degrees adopted the plan of forming themselves into societies or colleges, and having agreed on a rule of life correspondent with their tenets, each society chose for itself a governor, director, or superintendant, to whom the rest of the collective body might look up for example, advice, and encouragement. Hence the origin of monasteries and abbeys.—But there were some to whom even this kind of social intercourse, limited as it was, appeared incompatible with the grand design of liberating and composing the immortal mind. To them there appeared to be danger lest a community of labours and prayers, nay even the very seeing and holding converse with the brotherhood might awaken the mind to various cogitations and emotions, and thus prevent it from arriving at a state of quiet and repose. They, therefore, withdrew into deserts and caverns, and there devoted themselves to a life of severity and mortification, a life, in fact, estranged from every kind of human solace and convenience, and hence they came to be termed “ancho-rites” or “hermits.” I will confirm what I have thus said respecting the causes which occasioned the Ascetics to withdraw from the world and become monks, by the testimony of Cassian as to the end or purpose of the monastic life, which must, in the present instance, be allowed to possess the greatest weight, inasmuch as it conveys the sentiments of some of the immediate successors of these first Christian monks. For it is well known that Cassian drew what he records respecting monastic affairs and institutions from the monks of Egypt, with whom he was particularly conversant. Thus then in *Collation. ix. ch. ii. p. 360.* he introduces the illustrious Egyptian Abbat, Isaac, as expressing himself: *Omnis monachi finis, cordisque perfectio ad jugem atque indisruptam orationis perseverantiam tendit, et quantum humanæ fragilitati conceditur, ad immobilem tranquillitatem mentis ac perpetuam nititur puritatem. Ob quam possidendam, omnem tam laborem corporis, quam contritionem spiritus indefesse querimus et jugiter exercemus, et est inter alterutrum reciproca quædam inseparabilisque conjunctio.* And in chap. iii. *Ab omni discursu atque evagatione lubrica*

C E N T.
H.Alteration in
the form of
divine wor-
ship.

pline, and form of divine worship. For observing that in Egypt, as well as in other countries, the heathen worshippers, in addition to their public religious ceremonies, to which every one was admitted without distinction, had cer-

lubrica animus inhibendus, ut ita paulatim ad contemplationem Dei ac spiritualis intuitus incipiat sublimari. In Collation i. which is entitled *de Monachi intentione*, we find this subject treated of at much length by another Egyptian abbat of the name of Moses, who in chap. iv. p. 219. states, amongst other things, that, *finis professionis monachorum est regnum Dei, sed destinatio eorum est illam cordis purificationem quæ ad visionem Dei ducat.* This he, in chap. viii. p. 221. illustrates by the example of Martha and Mary, affirming that a monk ought *a contemplatione ascendere ad illud quod dicitur unum, id est, Dei solius intuitum, ut etiam sanctorum actus et ministeria mirifica supergressus, solius Dei jam pulchritudine scientiaque pascatur.* Monks, or Mystics, were, therefore, the offspring of that secret moral discipline of the Christians which was built upon the Egyptian philosophical tenets respecting the Deity, the world, the soul, and the nature of man; and may be placed much on a level with the Essenes and Therapeutæ of the Jews. Some faint vestiges of this are discoverable, even at the present hour, in the minds and institutions of the monks of Syria, Egypt, and Greece; of which, did I not feel myself called upon to bring this note to a speedy conclusion, I could readily adduce very abundant proof. The European monks of our times, on the contrary, appear to have altogether lost every idea of the causes that gave birth to the mode of life which they profess, and scarcely retain any semblance or even shadow of primitive manners or regulations. In this, however, there is nothing that should occasion any great surprise. Mystical theology and its offspring, the monastic life, are the fruit of an ardent sun and a parching climate, and, consequently, not at all calculated to arrive at any degree of maturity in our part of the world. It has uniformly happened, therefore, to all the various orders of monks that have at different times been established under skies so temperate as ours, that within a short period they experience no very trifling abatement of their primitive fervor, and suffer the precepts and institutions of their founders to become, as it were, a mere dead letter.

tain

tain secret and most sacred rites, to which they gave the name of "mysteries," and at the celebration of which none, except persons of the most approved faith and discretion, were permitted to be present, the Alexandrian Christians first, and after them others, were beguiled into a notion that they could not do better than make the Christian discipline accommodate itself to this model. The multitude professing Christianity were therefore divided by them into the "profane," or those who were not as yet admitted to the mysteries, and the "initiated," or faithful and perfect. To the former belonged the "catechumens," or those that had indeed enrolled themselves under the Christian banner, but had never been regularly received into the fellowship of Christ's flock by the sacrament of baptism; as also those who, for some transgression or offence had been expelled from communion with the Faithful. The latter, who were properly termed "the church," consisted of all such as had been regularly admitted into the Christian community by baptism, and had never forfeited their privileges, as well as of those who, having by some misconduct incurred the penalty of excommunication, had, upon their repentance, been again received into the bosom of the church. It became, moreover, customary, even in this century, more especially in Egypt and the neighbouring provinces, for persons desirous of being admitted into either of these classes, to be previously exercised and examined, we may even say tormented, for a great length of time, with a variety of ceremonies, for the most part nearly allied to those that were observed in preparing people for a fight of the heathen mysteries.

Upon

C E N T.
II.

Alteration in
the form of
divine wor-
ship.

C E N T.
II.

Alteration in
the form of
divine wor-
ship.

Upon the same principle, a two-fold form was given to divine worship, the one general and open to the people at large, the other special and concealed from all, except the faithful or initiated. To the latter belonged the common prayers, baptism, the *agapæ* or love-feasts, and the Lord's-supper; and as none were permitted to be present at these "mysteries," as they were termed, save those whose admission into the fellowship of the church was perfect and complete, so likewise was it expected that, as a matter of duty, the most sacred silence should be observed in regard to every thing connected with the celebration of them, and nothing whatever relating thereto be committed to the ears of the profane. From this constitution of things it came to pass, not only that many terms and phrases made use of in the heathen mysteries were transferred and applied to different parts of the Christian worship, particularly to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's-supper [n], but that, in not a few instances the sacred rites of the church were

[n] Instances in abundance, of terms and phrases applied after this manner, are to be found in Clement of Alexandria alone, who seems, as it were, to pride himself in placing the rites of Christianity on a parallel with the heathen mysteries, and in applying to the former certain terms and modes of expression deduced from the latter. Possibly we may not do wrong in referring to this source the application of the term "Symbolum" to those professions of faith which were made use of to distinguish the Christians from the rest of the world. The signs or watch-words communicated to those who were admissible to the mysteries, in proof of their fraternization, and that they might be readily distinguished from impostors, were, it is well known, termed "Symbola." The oriental Christians, also, of this age were accustomed to compare baptism with that lustration with which it was the practice

were contaminated by the introduction of various pagan forms and ceremonies [o].

XXXVII. As

CENT.
II.
Alteration in
the form of
divine wor-
ship.

to consecrate, in a certain degree, those who were about to be initiated in the mysteries; and the profession of faith, delivered at the font, with the watch-word or sign communicated to the candidates for admission to the secret rites of heathenism: on which account it was usual for this profession of faith to be solemnly delivered in the very act of baptism to every one admitted into the church. Indeed in its operation the profession of faith, to which we allude, was by no means dissimilar to the sign of mystical initiation amongst the heathen. For as, by means of the latter, those who had been admitted to a participation of the mysteries, were to be distinguished from the profane, so likewise, did that sum of the Christian religion which newly baptized persons received at the font serve as a mark whereby to know the true faithful, not only from heathen worshippers, but also from the catechumens. To any one allowing to this a due measure of attention, I think it will not appear improbable, that the term "Symbol" was one of those things that were adopted by the Christians from the discipline of the heathen mysteries. Nothing, certainly, is more common than for two things having several points of resemblance, to come in the course of time to be distinguished by one and the same title.

[o] A subject highly favourable, as it should seem, to the display of literary talent, and, certainly, every way worthy of the attention of a scholar well versed in matters of antiquity, has long offered itself to the public in the rites derived by the Christians, from the discipline of the mysteries. As yet, however, it has never been regularly taken up by any one. Until this be done, evidence sufficiently manifest and positive, as to the fact of the adoption of heathen forms and ceremonies by the Christians, is to be collected from the following authors as well as others; viz. Is. Casaubon. *Exerc. XVI. in Annal. Baron.* p. 388. Ia. Tollius, *Insignib. Itineris Italici; Not.* p. 151. 163. Anton. van Dale, *Diff. in Antiquit. & Marmora*, diss. I. p. 1. 2. Pet. King, *Hist. Apost. Creed*, cap. i. § xvi. p. 8. 15. 23. Ez. Spanheim, *Remarques sur les Empereurs de Julien*, p. 133, 134. 138. 434. & seq. Edm. Merill, *Observat.* lib. iii. cap. iii. David Clarkson, *Discours sur les Liturgies*, p. 36. 42, 43. Should any one enquire what causes could possibly have led the Christian teachers to adopt the rites of paganism, I answer, that in all probability

C E N T.
 II.
 Christian
 writers.

XXXVII. As by far a greater number of learned and philosophical characters were converted to Christianity in the course of this century than during the preceding one, it is not to be wondered at, that this period should also have had to boast of many more authors who consecrated their talents to the service of the true religion and the edification of the brethren. Numerous, however, as the Christian writers of this age were, but few can be named whose works have escaped the ravages of time. Of those who wrote in Greek there are three of distinguished eminence, namely, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria; men whom, allowing for the times in which they lived, we certainly cannot otherwise regard than as learned, eloquent, and gifted with no contemptible degree of genius and talent. The first of these having passed from Asia Minor into Gaul, was primarily made a presbyter, and afterwards bishop, of a small church which had in this century been founded at Lyons. Of his writings in support of the Christian faith, which were not a few, none besides his *five books against heresies* have come down to our time;

bability their only motive was an anxious desire to enlarge the bounds of the church. The rites themselves certainly possessed no very particular recommendation in point of grandeur or dignity; but a hope might very naturally be entertained that the heathen worshippers, upon finding somewhat of an accordance to subsist between the religion in which they had been bred up and Christianity, as to externals, might the more readily be prevailed on to dismiss their prejudices and embrace the latter. The end proposed in this case was, in itself, certainly of the most pure and upright nature, and may, therefore, justly be entitled to our praise; but it must at the same time be acknowledged that the means made use of for attaining it were not equally unexceptionable and praiseworthy.

and

and indeed these (with the exception of the first) have reached us merely through the medium of a wretchedly barbarous and obscure Latin translation [p]. The second, who was finally led to embrace Christianity after having tried almost every philosophical sect, published, amongst many other works, *two apologies for the Christians* addressed to the emperors Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, which are not undeservedly held in very high estimation [q]. Both of these suffered martyrdom in the cause of

C. E. N. T.
II.
Christian
writers.

[p] Two very splendid editions of the books of Irenæus *adversus Hæreses*, were given to the world soon after the commencement of the eighteenth century. The one by the learned Io. Ernest. Grabe, Oxon. 1702. fol. the other by Ren. Massuet, a Benedictine of the congregation of St. Maur. Lutet. Paris. 1710. fol. To the last are prefixed very ample dissertations by the editor, in which a variety of things relating to Irenæus and the sects whose principles he combats are brought under examination and illustrated. By both of these, however, a wide field has been left open to any future editor of Irenæus. Many are the passages that still require the hand of a sagacious emendator, and many are the passages that still invite the attention of an erudite and able expositor. Each of the above-named editors hath fallen into numerous errors even with regard to the very distinction of words.

[q] An edition of the works of Justin the philosopher and martyr (we purposely omit noticing any editions of particular tracts of his, such as his *two Apologies* and his *Dialogue with Trypho*) was published at London in the year 1722. fol. by Styan Thirlby, an ingenious writer, but who has omitted every thing that has been improperly attributed to Justin. This edition has never been held in much estimation. A more ample one was published at Paris, 1742, fol. by Prudentius Maranus, a Benedictine monk, who has included every thing that goes under the name of Justin, and enriched the whole with copious notes and some long dissertations of his own. To Justin, moreover, are added the following minor Greek writers of this century, viz. Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, and Hermias, the author of a little book holding up the Greek philosophers to

CENT.
II.Christian
writers.

of Christ; the latter at Rome under the reign of the emperor Marcus, the former at Lyons during the persecution of Severus. — The third, a presbyter of the church of Alexandria, and præfect of the Christian school established in that city, was a man of various reading, and particularly well versed in the literature of ancient Greece. Of the numerous works in behalf of Christianity that are ascribed to him, we possess merely his *Stromata*, *Pedagogue*, and *Exhortation to the Greeks*. Unfortunately his attachment to philosophy was such as to lead him into many and very great errors [r]. To these three are to be added Theophilus bishop of Antioch, whose *three books to Autolytus* in defence of the

to ridicule, and to which he gave the title of *Irrisio*. The diligence of Prudentius in collecting various readings and passages of ancient writers, entitles him certainly to commendation; but he is by no means happy in his judgment of the opinions of Justin and others of the fathers, or in his proposed corrections of the errors of transcribers.

[r] A very excellent and beautiful edition of Clemens Alexandrinus was published by Archbishop Potter, Oxon. 1715, fol. The world however has been taught to look for a better and more ample one, to the French Benedictines.

Potter, a man of very great ability, and particularly well skilled in Greek literature, has certainly, in an eminent degree, deserved well of Clement. For he has discovered a peculiar felicity in the restoration of a great number of passages, and aptly illustrated many others by quotations from ancient authors. Owing, however, to a weakness of sight, and the pressure of matters of the first moment, it was not permitted to this illustrious character to do all that, under different circumstances, he might have accomplished. The Latin translation therefore still remains incorrect, and in many parts we have still to lament a want of light and perspicuity. Very great difficulty is oftentimes to be encountered in developing Clement's meaning, it being frequently involved in much obscurity, and founded upon maxims or principles at present but little known: neither is it by any means an easy matter, on many occasions, to perceive the order and concatenation of his thoughts.

verity

verity and dignity of the Christian religion are still extant. Tatian, an Assyrian philosopher and orator, of whose numerous writings we possess no other remains than an *Oration addressed to the Gentiles* of his time, but which will not be found undeserving of perusal, even in the present day; and finally Athenagoras, a philosopher of no mean rank, and præfect of the Christian school of Alexandria, whose *Apology for the Christians*, and *Treatise concerning the Resurrection*, have both of them happily escaped the ravages of time [s].

C E N T.
II.
Christian
writers.

Of the Christian Latin writers of this century none of any name or value have reached our days except Tertullian, who was originally a lawyer, but afterwards became a presbyter of the church of Carthage. Much of ingenuity and acumen undoubtedly discovers itself in the various treatises of this author now extant, which are written partly in defence of the Christian religion against its enemies and corrupters; and partly with a view to the reformation of men's morals, and the lighting up within their bo-

[s] An edition of Theophilus, separately corrected and illustrated, was published by Io. Christ. Wolfe, Hamb. 1724, 8vo. The remains of this Christian writer were again given to the world, with additional annotations and various readings, by Prudentius Maranus at the end of his edition of Justin Martyr. Tatian was published separately by William Worth, Oxon. 1700. 8vo; and Athenagoras by Edw. Dechair, Oxon. 1706, 8vo; both enriched with various annotations of learned men. Nothing certainly can be more beautiful than these two editions in point of external form, but of their internal merit we are constrained to speak with some reserve: for whether regard be had to the words themselves, or the sense intended to be conveyed by them, there was certainly abundant room afforded for bringing forward these authors to much greater advantage.

C E N T. foms a ſpirit of genuine godlineſs and piety;
 II. but they are all of them compoſed in a ſtyle,
 not only tumid and bombaſtic, but beyond all
 meaſure obſcure. The opinions, moreover,
 which they exhibit, are harſh, oftentimes un-
 certain, and not leſs foreign from reaſon than
 from the ſacred writings. In fine, they plainly
 indicate him to have been a man of a credu-
 lous turn of mind, much addicted to ſeverity,
 and poſſeſſed of more ſubtilty than ſolid learn-
 ing [t].

Riſe and pro-
 pagation of
 Chriſtian
 ſects.
 Judaizing
 Chriſtians.

XXXVIII. Amidſt this mixture of prosperous
 and untoward circumſtances, and theſe endea-
 vours, on the part of certain teachers, to ren-
 der letters and philoſophy inſtrumental in giving
 additional ſtability and recommendation to the

[t] Of all the editions of Tertullian's works that of
 Nic, Rigaltius, Paris, 1641, fol. may be deemed the beſt.
 The one published by Ph. Priorius, Paris, 1663, fol. is in-
 deed more enriched with annotations of the learned, but not
 better or more correſt. The two editions which have ſub-
 ſequentially iſſued from the Venetian preſs are, in point of
 beauty and elegance, far behind thoſe of Paris: nor is their
 fidelity always to be relied on. An edition of this very
 obſcure writer, at once comprehensive, accurate, and ſuffi-
 ciently illuſtrated, has long been a deſideratum with the
 ſtudents of eccleſiaſtical antiquities. — Such an one has at
 different times been promiſed to the world by men of very
 eminent abilities, and amongſt the reſt by the Benedictine
 fraternity, but, unleſs I am altogether deceived, the learned
 will never be gratified with ſuch an edition of Tertullian
 as they would wiſh to poſſeſs. For not to notice the
 obſolete and unuſual terms which he on ſome occaſions ſeems
 ſtudiouſly to go out of the way for, and equally paſſing
 over a variety of phraſes connected with jurisprudence,
 and of which it is ſcarcely to be hoped that any one
 ſhould give us any ſatiſfactory explanation at the preſent
 day, his thoughts are, in innumerable inſtances, expreſſed
 in a way ſo concise, ſo obſcure, and ſo ambiguous, that
 we are left in a ſtate of utter uncertainty as to what it is
 that he means.

cauſe

C E N T.
II.
Judaizing
Christians.

cause of Christianity, the church most unhappily became divided into various factions and sects, which had for their authors and leaders a set of men who wished rather to take their own wisdom for a standard than to be guided by the words of Christ and his apostles. The first diffension of this nature that took place, occurred amongst the Christians of Palestine under the reign of the emperor Hadrian. For when Jerusalem, which had begun in some measure to revive from its ashes, was finally razed to the foundation by this emperor, and the whole Jewish nation were rendered subject to laws of the most rigorous cast, the greatest part of the Christians inhabiting Palestine renounced the law of Moses, to which they had before paid obedience, and placed themselves under the guidance of a leader named Marcus, who was not a Jew, but a stranger, and whom they appear to have selected for the express purpose of manifesting that they meant to have nothing in common with the Jews. Filled with indignation at this proceeding of their brethren, the rest of the Jewish converts, who still retained an immoderate attachment to the law of Moses, withdrew into that part of Palestine which is distinguished by the name of Peræa, and there established a peculiar church of their own, in which the ceremonial law was retained in all its ancient dignity. This church, which could, unquestionably, have been but a small one, never attained to any degree of celebrity, but, after having maintained its ground in Palestine for some centuries, began, not long after the age of Constantine the Great, to go back, and gradually dwindled away into nothing [u].

XXXIX. Infig-

[u] A very notable passage relating to this matter occurs
VOL. II. 0

C E N T.

II.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites.

XXXIX. Insignificant, however, as these Judaizing Christians, comparatively, were in point of

curs in Sulpitius Severus, *Histor. Sacr.* lib. ii. cap. xxxi. p. 245. *Et quia Christiani (i. e. those living in Palestine) ex Judæis potissimum putabantur (namque tum Hierosolymæ non nisi ex circumcissione habebat ecclesia sacerdotem) militum cohortem custodias in perpetuum agitare jussit, quæ Judæos omnes Hierosolymæ aditu arceret. Quod quidem Christianæ fidei proficiebat: quia tum pæne omnes Christum Deum sub legis observatione credebant. Nimirum id Domino ordinante, dispositum, ut legis servitus a libertate fidei atque ecclesiæ tolleretur. Ita tum primum Marcus ex gentibus apud Hierosolymam episcopus fuit.* Although this passage of Sulpitius is neither so lucid nor so regular as might be wished, it yet clearly points out the origin of that church, which held, that by becoming Christians men did not exonerate themselves from the necessity of observing the law of Moses. For it appears from it; (I.) That the Christians of Jewish extraction, residing within the confines of Palestine, as long as any hope remained that Jerusalem might recover from its first overthrow, were accustomed to unite an observance of the Mosaic ritual with the worship of Christ. (II.) That the greatest part of these Christians were, under the reign of Hadrian, when every hope of seeing Jerusalem revive was extinguished, induced to repudiate the law of Moses, and choose one Marcus, a stranger, for their bishop. This, unquestionably, they did under an apprehension that if they appointed a bishop of Hebrew origin he might be induced, from an innate attachment to the law of his forefathers, to attempt the gradual restoration of those ceremonies which they had come to the determination of for ever renouncing. (III.) That the reason which induced these Christians to renounce the law of Moses was the severity of the emperor Hadrian, who had surrounded with a military guard the space on which the city of Jerusalem formerly stood, and prohibited the whole race of Jews from having any access thereto. With regard to this point, indeed, Sulpitius is less perspicuous and luculent than could be wished, and is altogether on the reserve as to many things on which it would have been more judicious in him to have spoken out. Upon the whole, however, we can pretty well ascertain what his meaning is, and without much difficulty supply those particulars in respect of which he is deficient. The Christians residing in Palestine, so long as they continued to observe

of numbers, unanimity was not to be met with amongst them; for they were divided into two sects

C E N T.
II.

The Naza-
renes and
Ebionites.

observe the law of Moses, were looked upon by the Romans as Jews; and certainly not altogether without reason. When Hadrian therefore had prohibited the Jews from all access to the spot whereon Jerusalem had formerly stood, these Christians found themselves equally interdicted from any approach thereto. But it seems that these latter felt particularly uneasy under this restraint, and were most anxiously desirous to free themselves from it. They therefore renounced altogether the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and lest the Romans might doubt of their sincerity, they committed the government of their church to one who was not a Jew but a stranger. Having thus openly divorced themselves from every connection with the Jewish law, they were permitted by the Romans to have free access to that district from whence the Jews were altogether excluded. All these things, it must be admitted, may, with a moderate degree of attention, be collected from Sulpitius notwithstanding the very great degree of negligence with which he writes. But we shall now proceed to make some enquiry as to a point on which this author is altogether silent; namely, as to what cause could possibly have excited in these Christians so very strong a desire to have access to the scite of Jerusalem, that sooner than not obtain this object of their wishes, they were led to abandon their paternal law and rites, and subject themselves to a man who was not a Jew? Is it to be believed that superstition could have stimulated them to all this? Could they have been prompted by a wish to feed and refresh their minds with a view of those places in which our Blessed Saviour had passed his life and risen again from the dead? Could they have been actuated by the belief, which was at one time so very general amongst the Christians, and which continues to be entertained by not a few even in the present day, that it constitutes not the meanest part of religion and piety to visit sacred places? But it is absolutely incredible that men possessing such a strength of mind as to repudiate the religious ceremonies of their ancestors, which had been adhered to for ages with the utmost scrupulosity, and to commit the superintendance of their sacred rites and religion to a foreigner, should, at the same time, have been so weak and superstitious as to be incapable of enduring the thought of being excluded from those places which Christ,

C E N T. sects differing widely from each other in their
 II. tenets respecting Christ, and the necessity of obe-
 dience

The Naza-
renes and
Ebionites.

whilst here below, had honoured by his presence. If such were their character, it might well be said, that in their breasts superstition had been opposed to superstition, and that the greater, contrary to all probability, had fallen before the lesser one. There must, unquestionably, therefore, have been some other reason which induced these Christians to consider the liberty of having free access to the scite of Jerusalem as of greater moment than an adherence to their paternal ceremonies and institutions, and not to hesitate at purchasing this privilege by an utter renunciation of the Mosaic law. Nor do I conceive that much labour or difficulty will be encountered in ascertaining what this reason was. At no very great distance from the spot whereon Jerusalem formerly stood, the emperor Hadrian had constructed a new city bearing the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, and which had been endowed by him with very considerable privileges. Into this new colony the Christians who had fled for refuge to the insignificant little town of Pella and its neighbourhood, and were daily experiencing great deprivations and inconvenience, felt an anxious desire to be admitted. But the emperor had peremptorily excluded all the Jewish nation from this his newly-built city; and as the Christians who adhered to the law of Moses were apparently not distinguishable from Jews, this prohibition was, of course, considered as extending likewise to them. Feeling it then of the first importance to their well-being to procure for themselves the liberty of removing with their effects into the city of *Ælia*, and of being admitted to the rights of citizenship there, a considerable number of these Christians came to the resolution of formally renouncing all obedience to the law of Moses. The immediate author of this measure was, in all likelihood, that very Marcus whom they appointed as their bishop: a man whose name evidently speaks him to have been a Roman, and who doubtless was not unknown to those of his nation that had the chief command in Palestine, and might possibly have been related to some officer of eminence there. Perceiving, therefore, one of their own nation placed at the head of the Christians, the Roman præfects dismissed at once all apprehension of their exciting disturbance in the newly-established colony, and from this time ceased to regard them as Jews. In consequence of this favourable alteration in the sentiments

dience to the law, and possibly as to various other matters of opinion. Of these the one, namely, C E N T.
II. that The Naza-
renes and
Ebionites.

of the Romans towards them, the Christians found themselves no longer debarred from the liberty of settling in the newly-founded city, but were, without scruple, admitted to a participation of its privileges, which were of the most valuable and important nature. In what we have thus suggested, there is nothing whatever difficult of belief, and it must certainly be allowed to receive a sanction of no little weight from what we find expressly recorded by Epiphanius, *de Ponderibus et Mensuris*, § xv. p. 171. that the Christians, upon their renouncing the law of Moses, were suffered to remove from Pella to Jerusalem. By Jerusalem we must understand the emperor Hadrian's new city, which, posterior to the time of Constantine the Great, insensibly lost the name of *Ælia Capitolina*, and acquired that of Jerusalem. Vid. Henr. Valesius, *Adnot. ad Eusebium*, p. 61. But even if no memorial of this were extant, no room whatever could be afforded for controversy. For it is indisputably certain, that from the time of Hadrian there existed a Christian church of celebrity at *Ælia*, and that the prelates, who were commonly termed bishops of Jerusalem, were in point of fact bishops of *Ælia*. I must beg the reader, however, not to understand me as meaning that the Christians of Palestine, in renouncing the law of Moses, were influenced solely by a wish to obtain the liberty of removing into the city of *Ælia*. Without doubt, that Marcus, at whose instance they were prevailed on to renounce the law of Moses, made it appear to them, by irrefragable arguments, that the authority and dignity of the Mosaic ritual had been abolished by the coming of the Messiah. By men, however, who had been accustomed, even from their tenderest years, to regard the law of Moses with the highest degree of veneration, his arguments would have been received with less effect had they not been seconded by a prospect of being admitted to a share in the privileges of *Ælia*, and of thus obtaining a deliverance from the oppressions and numerous other evils to which the Jews were at this period subjected; or if the second and complete subversion of Jerusalem by Hadrian had not extinguished every hope of seeing the temple rebuilt, and the Jewish nation reinstated in the privilege of worshipping God on that spot, after its accustomed manner. Sulpitius does not add that this remarkable defection from the observances of their forefathers was not general amongst

C E N T.
II.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites.

that of the Nazarenes, is not considered by ancient Christian writers as coming within the class of heretics; but the other, that of the Ebionites, is uniformly reckoned in the catalogue of those sects whose principles strike at the very fundamentals of the Christian faith. Neither of them adopted those accounts of our Blessed Saviour's life which were held sacred by other Christians, but each had a peculiar gospel of its own, differing in several respects from that which we regard as genuine [v]. By the

the Christians of Judæa, but that a part of them still remained invincibly attached to the Mosaic law, and withdrew from every intercourse with those of their brethren who had renounced it. Indeed there was no occasion for his noticing this, inasmuch as the thing was notorious. Nothing, in fact, can be better attested than that there existed in Palestine two Christian churches, by the one of which an observance of the Mosaic law was retained, and by the other disregarded. This division amongst the Christians of Jewish origin, did not take place before the time of Hadrian, for it can be ascertained, that previously to his reign the Christians of Palestine were unanimous in an adherence to the ceremonious observances of their forefathers. There can be no doubt, therefore, but that this separation originated in the major part of them having been prevailed on by Marcus to renounce the Mosaic ritual, by way of getting rid of the numerous inconveniences to which they were exposed, and procuring for themselves a reception, as citizens, into the newly-founded colony of Ælia Capitolina.

[v] That the gospel of the Nazarenes was not the same with that of the Ebionites, is most clearly manifest from the few notices respecting each of them that are to be met with in ancient writers. Vid. Jo. Albert. Fabricius, *Cod. Apocryph. Nov. Test.* tom. i. p. 355. et seq. In the gospel of the Ebionites, for instance, to pass over other things, the first two chapters of St. Matthew were omitted, whereas it appears from St. Jerome that these chapters formed a part of the gospel of the Nazarenes. The reader will find this subject more particularly adverted to in my *Vindicia Antiquæ Christianorum Disciplinæ contra Tolandi Nazarenorum,*

the Nazarenes [*w*], our Blessed Saviour was considered, not only as having been generated

C E N T.

II.

Of
The Naza-
renes and
Ebionites

renum, sect. i. cap. v. p. 112. Setting aside the actual difference of their tenets, this one fact is sufficient to prove that the Ebionites and Nazarenes were two separate and distinct sects.

[*w*] Epiphanius is the first who ranks the Nazarenes in the class of heretics. By more ancient writers the Ebionites are considered as of that description, but not the Nazarenes. The reason of this I suspect to have been, that the Christians, previously to the time of Constantine the Great, although they might regard the Nazarenes as brethren labouring under a degree of error, yet never considered them as corrupters of the Christian faith: nor will this appear extraordinary to those who are in the least conversant with Christian antiquities. For the tenets of the Nazarenes respecting Christ were by far more just and correct than those of the Ebionites, and, although they would have deemed it inexcusable in themselves to neglect the ceremonial observances of the law of Moses, they yet by no means exacted an obedience to the Jewish ritual from those who were not of the Hebrew race. But Jews of this description, who were contented with observing the law themselves, and sought not to impose it on others, were, in the second and third centuries, looked upon as genuine Christians, and deemed not unworthy of the name of brethren. This is clearly intimated by Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 136. edit. Jebbian. For being interrogated by Trypho in his disputation with him, whether those Jews who, notwithstanding that they had embraced the Christian faith, continued steadfast in their observance of the law of Moses, could obtain salvation? he thus replies: λέγω ὅτι σωθήσεται τοιαῦτος, εἰ μὴ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἐκπαντὸς πείθειν ἀγωνίζηται ταῦτα αὐτῷ φυλάσσειν, λέγων εἰ σωθήσεται αὐτὸς, εἰ μὴ ταῦτα φυλάξωσιν. *Ego quidem salvatum talem iri aio, qui alios homines in sententiam suam adducere annifus non fuerit, non servatum eos iri affirmans nisi eadem* (the law,) *secum servaverint.* Many more things of this kind are to be found in Justin's dialogue; but at the same time he does not dissemble that there were some who were less liberal in their determination of this point. But, possibly, it may be objected by some that the Nazarenes were anciently included under the name of Ebionites: nor is this objection altogether destitute of colour. For it is certain, that the

CENT. of a virgin, but also as partaking, in a certain II.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites.

writers of the second and third centuries occasionally made use of the term Ebionites in a much more comprehensive sense than we find it bearing in works of a more recent date. In fact it should seem that, at that early period, the denomination of Ebionites was applied indiscriminately to all such Jews, as notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity, continued to observe the law of Moses. Vid. Origen *contra Celsum*, lib. iii. opp. tom. ii. p. 385. Hence it comes to pass that we find the Ebionites of those times distributed into two classes, the orthodox, and the heretical; into those who believed our Blessed Saviour to have been born of a virgin, and those who denied this. Vid. Origen *contra Cels.* lib. v. tom. ii. opp. p. 625. Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xvii. p. 99. Theodoret, *Fabul. Hæretic.* § ii. cap. i. p. 219. et seq. But when I take into consideration what is said by Irenæus and others on the subject of the Ebionites, I cannot help giving the preference to the opinion which I have first above stated respecting them. The term Nazarene, moreover, with these men had precisely the same import as that of Christian has with us. For being Jews, and speaking only the Hebrew language, they found a difficulty in naturalising the word *Christianus*, which is of Greek origin, and therefore substituted *Nazaræus*, a term bearing equal relation to our Saviour Christ, in its room. St. Matthew in his Gospel, chap. ii. 23. states it as a prediction of the prophets of the Old Testament, that the Messiah should be called a Nazarene. Under the sanction of this authority then, these Judaizing Christians thought themselves warranted in assuming the title of Nazarenes, just in the same way as the Greek converts had taken the denomination of Christians from the Redeemer's title of Χριστός. Either term alike indicates the disciples or followers of that Messiah who had been promised of old to the Jewish nation. Hence we may collect the sense in which we ought to understand what Epiphanius has recorded respecting the Nazarenes. *Hæres.* xxix. § vi. ἐπὶ Χριστιανὸς ἐκινεῖς ἐπονομαστῶν, ἀλλὰ Ναζωραίους. *Nolunt Christiani vocari, sed Nazaræi.* Being Jews, they felt a repugnance to adopt a Greek denomination, but selected a Hebrew term of similar import and significance, and one that appeared to them of an equally honourable nature, since it was no uncommon thing for our Lord to be styled a Nazarene; and instances had occurred even of his having applied this appellation to himself. In this, certainly, there was nothing whatever that could reasonably be imputed to them as a fault.

degree,

degree, of the divine nature [x]. The rites instituted by Moses, they regarded as still necessary to be observed by all Christians of the Hebrew race, but they did not exact a conformity to the Jewish law from such as were of a different origin: neither did they consider the additions that had been made to the Mosaic ritual at different times, by certain masters

C E N T.
II.

The Nazarenes and Ebionites.

[x] What the precise opinion entertained by the Nazarenes, respecting Christ, was, is not altogether clear. Many of our most eminent scholars, such as Grotius, Vossius, Spencer, and Huet, conceive them to have been altogether exempt from error in their notions on this subject, and that their belief was in no respect different from ours as to the union of two natures in Christ, the one human, the other divine. By no one has this orthodoxy of the Nazarenes been vindicated with greater learning and ability than by Mich. Lequien, in his *Adnot. ad Damascen.* tom. i. p. 82, 83. as well as in a particular dissertation *de Nazarenis et eorum Fide*, which is the seventh of those that he has annexed to his edition of Damascene's works. Nothing whatever has been suffered to escape his diligence that could possibly aid in demonstrating that the Nazarenes' belief respecting Christ was equally correct with our own. But none of all the proofs which he adduces from ancient authors can be said so far to establish the fact as to leave no room for doubt. Manifest, indeed, it is, that the Nazarenes regarded our Blessed Lord as of a higher and more exalted nature than a mere man; and that they looked upon him as having been begotten of a virgin by the omnipotent will of the Deity, and admitted him to be, in a certain sense, the Son of God, endowed with divine power. But whether they believed him to have had an existence prior to Mary, and that God and man were united in his person, admits of very considerable doubt. In fact the sense of all the passages that have been brought forward by men of erudition with a view to establish this, is very uncertain and equivocal. On the contrary there are some passages in ancient authors which appear to furnish sufficient proof of the Nazarenes having denied the divinity of Christ. See, for example, Origen's discourse *de Duobus Cæcis*, tom. i. opp. p. 427. edit. Huet.

and

C E N T. and doctors of the law, as deserving of any
 II. sort of respect, but treated them as things that
 The Nazarenes and Ebionites. ought to be either abolished or at least suffered to sink into oblivion [y].

XL. The Ebionites, who derived their name either from some man, or from some particular fact or opinion [z], were a sect of a much worse description

[y] That the Nazarenes were averse to the rites and institutions which had been added to the Mosaic precepts by the Pharisees and interpreters of the law; and that they considered nothing as obligatory except the genuine commands of the great Hebrew legislator, is abundantly manifest from the testimony of St. Jerome, who had not only read their books, but lived on terms of familiarity with them. Vid. *Com. in Esaiam*, tom. ii. opp. p. 34. & 106. But whether they considered the law of Moses as of general obligation, or as binding on the Jews exclusively, remains as yet a question with the learned. For my own part, I feel not the least hesitation in declaring my assent to the opinion that the Nazarenes believed the Mosaic law to be obligatory on no other Christians than those who were descendants of the stock of Abraham. And a principal reason with me for acceding to this opinion is, that St. Jerome, who was intimately acquainted with their principles and tenets, represents them as having entertained the highest veneration for St. Paul, and as having assigned him a distinguished place amongst those whom they regarded as teachers of celestial truth. Hieron. *Com. in Esaiam*, tom. ii. p. 35. For how could it be possible that the great apostle of the Gentiles, who laboured with such zeal in proving that the law of Moses ought not to retain its ancient force and authority, should have been commended and held in high estimation by men who considered obedience to that law as indispensable in every one who would arrive at salvation? Not a doubt can exist but that the Ebionites, who would willingly have imposed an observance of the Mosaic law on the christians in general, execrated St. Paul as an impious impugner of that law. This argument is of greater strength and weight than to be shaken by certain *diſta* of St. Augustine or others, that by a forced interpretation may be made to militate against it.

[z] Tertullian, and, after him, many other ancient Christian

description than that of the Nazarenes. For in the first place, although they held our Saviour Jesus Christ, in great veneration as a divine legate or prophet, they would not admit that any miraculous circumstances attended his birth, but maintained that he was the natural son of

C E N T.
II.
The Ebion-
ites.

tian writers derive the appellation of "Ebionites" from some man. Vid. Jo. Albert. Fabricius, *Annot. ad Philastrum de Hæres.* p. 81. & seq. Neither is there any difficulty in believing that some Jew of the name of Ebion might have been the author of those tenets by which the Ebionites were distinguished from other Christians of the Hebrew race. But inasmuch as Origen, *Philocal.* cap. i. p. 17. who is followed by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. iii. cap. xxvii. p. 99. states this sect to have acquired the title of "Ebionites" or "paupers" from the low and abject sentiments which they entertained respecting Christ; and the same Origen, in another place, *contra Celsum*, lib. ii. p. 56. accounts for the name from their attachment to the indigent and insufficient law of Moses; and lastly, since the Ebionites themselves, as is observed by Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xxx. § xvii. p. 141. considered the name to have had an allusion to the poverty and neediness of their ancestors, certain of the learned have conceived that more credit is due to these opinions than to the former one, although they at the same time betray an utter ignorance as to which of these latter is most to be relied on. Were it to be left to me to determine this point, I should at once give the preference to the opinion of the Ebionites themselves; for nothing can be more certain than that by far the greatest number of those Christians of Jerusalem, from whom the Ebionites were descended, were involved in a state of indigence; nor is it at all unlikely that this their poverty might have been cast in their teeth by the rest of their brethren and finally have given rise to a taunting ignominious appellation. Origen and Eusebius, as may be gathered even from the inconsistency of the former in his explication of this name, convey no information that can be depended on, as to the origin of the term Ebionites, but merely give us their own interpretation of the word, or point out how aptly it appears to reconcile itself with the tenets of the sect. But as this question respecting the origin of the term Ebionites is, in fact, of no very great importance, I prefer leaving it undetermined, to engaging in any controversy on the subject.

Joseph

C E N T.

II.

The Ebionites.

Joseph and Mary, begotten according to that law by which all other mortals are produced. In the next place they not only observed the Mosaic law of ceremonies in all particulars themselves, but also insisted on its being requisite for every one who would obtain favour with God, to do the like. St. Paul, therefore, who had so strenuously exerted himself in demonstrating that no necessity existed for conforming to the Mosaic ritual, it may easily be believed, found but little favour with them. Lastly, they refused to give up even the superstitious appendages which had been added to the institutions of Moses by the Pharisees and doctors of the law [a].

XLI. From

[a] In the statement which I here submit to the reader respecting the Ebionites, I am borne out, in several particulars expressly, and as to others in no very obscure terms, by Irenæus, and the best Christian writers of the early ages. With regard to the last circumstance noticed, namely, that of their having retained, in addition to the rites prescribed by Moses, the superstitious observances and practices introduced by the Pharisees, in opposition to the Nazarenes, by whom these innovations were utterly lopped off and discarded, it may indeed appear to a cursory examiner of the authors above alluded to, to admit of some doubt. An attentive consideration, however, of the following words of Irenæus will, I think, place the matter out of all dispute. *Et circumciduntur ac perseverant in his consuetudinibus, quæ sunt secundum legem et Judaico charactere vitæ.* Lib. i. *adv. Hæres.* cap. xxvi. p. 105. & seq. Irenæus here obviously makes a distinction between an observance of the precepts of the law and the Jewish mode or character of life, and represents the Ebionites as conforming no less to the one than the other. But as to this Jewish character, or mode of life distinct from the precepts of the law of Moses, what else can it mean than that rule of life and morals which had been imposed on the necks of the Jewish multitude by their masters and doctors as a sort of secondary law? What Irenæus adds of their having worshipped the city of Jerusalem as the immediate residence of the Deity, I consider as indisputably

XLI. From the insignificant and obscure sects, which we have thus enumerated, unsupported as they were by any considerable degree either of talents or authority, the Christian church experienced comparatively but little detriment. By far the greater part of the ill-will and malignity which it had to encounter from without, as well as of the discord and dissensions, by which it was internally distracted and disturbed, is undoubtedly to be attributed to those who were for expounding the religion of Christ upon the principles of the oriental philosophy. During the first century these men can scarcely be said to have emerged from obscurity: they

C E N T.
II.

Sects generated of the oriental philosophy.

putably false and injurious. For it was never held lawful by the Jews to worship, even in the slightest degree, any thing except the one true and living God. What gave occasion to this calumny was their custom of turning always towards the scite of Jerusalem when they offered up their prayers. Prior to the war of Hadrian there can be no doubt but that the Jews were accustomed to resort, for the purposes of prayer, to the spot whereon the temple had formerly stood, in order that they might conform themselves, as far as possible, to the custom of their forefathers and the ancient religious discipline of their nation. But even this miserable consolation was wrested from them by Hadrian, who by a severe edict forbad any Jews to approach Jerusalem, and surrounded the whole area of the temple and the holy city with a military guard. Nothing more was left then to this afflicted people, so fondly attached to the practices of their ancestors, than, when engaged in prayer, to turn their faces towards the spot where once had stood their city and their temple.

Epiphanius, *Heres.* xxx. in treating of the Ebionites, attributes to them many other errors than those above enumerated, amongst which are to be found several, not only of a silly, but of the very grossest nature. He, however, takes care to apprise his readers, § iii. p. 127. & § xiv. p. 141. that his remarks respect the Sampſæans and the Elcesaites as well as the Ebionites, and that the primitive Ebionites were entire strangers to any such heretical opinions. It would be wrong therefore to blend those doctrines with the tenets of the Ebionites.

lived

C E N T.
II.Sects gene-
rated of the
oriental phi-
losophy.

lived unnoticed and the converts that they made were but few; but under the reign of Hadrian, the apostles, and the principal of their disciples being dead, they began to take courage, and by degrees succeeded in forming numerous congregations of their followers in various of the provinces; and indeed did not rest satisfied with merely instituting these associations, but left no means unessayed that might contribute either to their reputation, their stability, or their increase [b]. Under the banners of these new sects great numbers of Christians, who had previously entertained none but sound opinions, were tempted to enrol themselves, being seduced, in part by a fanatical kind of eloquence that characterised many of their leaders, in part by the very great shew of piety exhibited by others, and in part by the prospect of being countenanced in living more at their ease and sinning without controul. A no less disastrous evil attending the rise of the Gnostics was, that both the Jews and the heathens, considering the disgraceful maxims and tenets of these sectaries as the genuine princi-

[b] Several of the more early Christian writers have left it on record, that under the reign of Hadrian, when the Apostles were all dead, the Gnostic sects, that had previously languished in obscurity, began to emerge from their concealment; and that by the exertions which they used in gaining profelytes, and establishing congregations of their followers, the cause of genuine Christianity was most sadly disturbed and impeded. Vid. Clemens Alex. lib. vii. *Stromat.* cap. xvii. p. 898. & seq. Cyprian. *Epist.* lxxv. p. 144. ed. Baluzian. Hegefippus apud Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* lib. iii. cap. xxxii. p. 104. & lib. iv. cap. xxii. p. 142. although as to the sense of this latter passage the learned are not exactly agreed. The admission of this testimony is unavoidable, inasmuch as we meet with nothing in other writers at all repugnant to it, and the origin of none of the Gnostic sects, except that of the Cerinthians, can be traced higher than to the age of Hadrian.

ples of Christianity, were led to regard the religion of the gospel with increasing hatred and contempt: so that the Christian teachers were thenceforward necessarily compelled to employ a considerable portion of the time allotted to the establishment and propagation of the faith, in repressing the progress of Gnosticism, and in exposing, through the medium of writings and disputations, the insane pretensions and principles maintained by its abettors [c].

C E N T.
II.

Seets generated of the oriental philosophy.

XLII. This

[c] The Greeks and Romans, who were strangers to the genuine principles of Christianity, erroneously conceived that the maxims and tenets of the Gnostics were those of the Christians at large. Many of these maxims and tenets, however, were not only foolish and ridiculous, but fundamentally vile and disgraceful, and hence it came to pass, that the Christians were looked upon either as persons devoid of reason and worthy only to be held in derision, or else as a set of unprincipled wretches that could not be treated with too much severity. The testimony of many of the ancient fathers might be cited as to this, but I shall content myself with adducing only one passage out of Irenæus *advers. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. xxiv. *ad detractionem divini ecclesiæ nominis, quemadmodum et gentes, a Satana præmissi sunt,* (he is speaking of the Carpocratians, a Gnostic sect of infamous memory) *uti secundum alium modum, quæ sunt illorum audientes homines, et putantes omnes nos tales esse, avertant aures suas a præconio veritatis, aut, et videntes, quæ sunt illorum, omnes nos blasphemant, in nullo eis communicantes, neque in doctrina, neque in moribus, neque in quotidiana conversatione. Sed vitam quidem luxuriosam, sententiam impiam (habentes) ad velamen malitiæ ipsorum nomine (Christianorum) abutuntur.* The case was much the same with the Jews who had settled amongst the Greeks and Romans without the confines of Palestine. For many of these, who were at first far from being equally prejudiced against Christianity with the rest of their brethren, upon hearing the Gnostics maintain, that the God of the Hebrews and of the Old Testament was a different being from the True and Supreme God,—that nothing like divine authority or dignity could properly be attributed either to Moses or his law,—that the God of the Jews was indeed an angel endowed with vast power, but devoid of clemency

C E N T.

II.

Gnostic
sects.

XLII. This business of arresting the progress of Gnosticism amongst the multitude, became every day a concern of still wider extent, and attended with increasing difficulties, in consequence of the numerous dissensions, disputes, and separations that were continually taking place amongst the votaries of the oriental philosophy. For notwithstanding all of those who looked upon the Creator of the world as a different being from the Deity, may be considered as having commenced their career upon nearly one and the same set of principles, yet they had proceeded but a little way when as many of them as preferred following their own judgment rather than any other man's, struck off into different paths, and not only gave to the philosophy which they had espoused a diversity of modification in itself, but also introduced variations in the manner of reconciling and connecting it with the Christian religion. Hence were generated disagreements, disputations, and controversies, which soon gave rise to factions, parties, and sects that were continually at strife with each other. It is by no means easy to determine as to the number of these sects. There seems, indeed, to be but little hazard in our considering them as having been less numerous than they are represented

clemency and wisdom, and a slave to the lust of dominion, — that the resurrection of the dead was undeserving of belief, — that matter was intrinsically corrupt, and, consequently, all bodies inherently vicious and depraved, I say, upon hearing the Gnostics avow not only these but various other principles and maxims diametrically opposite to the religious tenets of the Jews; and hastily running away with the idea that such was the way in which Christ had instructed his disciples to think and believe, they were led to regard the Christian religion with every possible degree of hatred and disgust.

by

by ancient authors ; but at the same time it is certain, that the greatest discord prevailed amongst the Gnostics, and that the sects generated by this discord were not a few [d]. Owing to the inconsistency and obscurity of ancient authors, we find ourselves equally in the dark as to the precise time when either of these sects individually was formed, or the circumstances that attended its rise : but since it is certain that all of them, which attained to any degree of consequence or celebrity, were in a flourishing state so early as the middle of this century, it is not to be doubted but that the principal of them must have been instituted not long subsequent to its commencement.

C. E. N. T.
II.
Gnostic
sects.

[d] It seems not at all improbable that the ancient Christian teachers, in consequence of their not observing a due degree of caution in distinguishing between the Gnostic sects might multiply them without reason. Each sect, most likely, was at the first known by a variety of names ; one perhaps derived from the place where it originated, another from its founder, and another again from some particular tenet or leading principle : and it is certainly very possible that, from their either not sufficiently attending to this circumstance, or perhaps being entirely unacquainted with it, those who made it their business to oppose these sects might fall into the error of representing them as much more numerous than they actually were. It should seem, also, that certain of these sects were known by different names in different parts of the world ; by one, for instance, in Syria, by another in Egypt, and by a third, possibly, in some of the other provinces : a portion of this or that particular sect, moreover, it is probable might acquire a peculiar denomination from some eminent teacher to whom they might have attached themselves. Men, by far more sagacious than the ancient Christian pastors were, have been frequently imposed upon in matters of this kind, and been led to believe in the existence of a much greater number of sects than ever had any being. Even modern ecclesiastical history supplies us with a remarkable instance in illustration of this in the case of the Anabaptists.

C E N T.

II.

The Elce-
faites.

XLIII. In bringing some of the principal of these sects under review we find our attention first called towards the Elcefaites, whose founder, according to Epiphanius, was a Jew named Elxai, who, under the reign of Trajan, so successfully ingratiated himself with a Jewish sect, named the Offens, as to make converts of them all, and prevail on them, in a body, to adopt his errors. This man, although a Jew, and of course a worshipper of the one only true God, yet contrived to blend much of the superstitions of the east with the religion of his forefathers; and, amongst other things, protested altogether against the use of sacrifices, contending that the offering up of victims to the Deity was a practice to which the patriarchs of old were utter strangers. This circumstance, considering that in other respects he manifested a reverence for Moses, and adhered strictly to the Jewish ritual, seems to indicate his having belonged to the sect of the Essenes, who pretended that the law of Moses ought not to be taken literally, but that there was a recondite system of morality concealed beneath its precepts. It is, however, not by any means certain, as even Epiphanius himself allows, that the Elcefaites were a Christian sect. Elxai, it is true, in a book which Epiphanius had seen, speaks in a general way of Christ, and bestows on him very high encomiums, but nothing whatever is added from whence it can be ascertained whether or not he meant, under that title, to speak of Jesus of Nazareth. This certainly is not characteristic of a Christian; and I, therefore, for my own part, entertain not the least doubt but that the Elcefaites were

were a Jewish sect, and some branch of the Effenes [e].

XLIV. If the Elcesaites then be considered as not coming properly within the description of a Christian sect, we are certainly bound, in marshalling the leaders of the different Gnostic factions, to assign the first place to Saturninus of Antioch, whom the early Christian writers represent as having been a disciple of the Samaritan Menander; a circumstance which, though it cannot well be believed, must yet be allowed to possess no inconsiderable weight as an argument in favour of the antiquity of his sect [f]. This man, previously to his becoming a Christian, belonged to that class of philosophers who believed that, in addition to the Deity, of whom they pretended that no one had any knowledge, there had existed from all eternity, a material principle intrinsically evil and corrupt, over which presided

C E N T
II.
The philo-
sophy of Sa-
turninus.

[e] Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xix. § iii. p. 41. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. vi. c. xxxviii. p. 234. Theodoret. *Fabul. Hæret.* lib. ii. c. vii. p. 221. & seq.

[f] If Saturninus had been a disciple of Menander, propriety would have required that his sect should have been referred to the first century; and amongst the learned there have not been wanting several, as Le Clerc and others, who, upon this single ground alone, have been actually induced to refer it to that age. But in this instance too hasty and implicit a reliance has certainly been placed on those ancient writers who represent Saturninus as having been educated under Menander. For first, the discipline of Menander differs most materially from that which Saturninus professed; and in the next place, Menander, as I have above shewn, cannot, with the least propriety, be considered as coming within the description of a Christian heretic. Much rather therefore may we credit the testimony of Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* lib. iv. cap. vii. and Theodoret. *Fabular. Hæretic.* lib. i. cap. ii. p. 193. by both of whom Saturninus is expressly represented as having flourished under the reign of the emperor Hadrian.

C E N T. a certain governor or prince. This world, and the first parents of the human race, he supposed to have been created by seven angels, without the knowledge of the Supreme Deity. These seven spirits, there can be no doubt, were the same with those powerful genii begotten of God, whom the people of the east conceived to reside in and rule over the seven planets or moveable stars; for that such were the founders of this nether world, was an opinion entertained by various others of the Gnostics. The fabric of the world, when completed, did not appear displeasing in the sight of the Almighty, wherefore he breathed into man, who as yet was endowed with nothing beyond mere animal life, a rational soul; and having divided the newly-created world into seven districts, he permitted the seven angels by whom it had been fashioned, to assume the dominion thereof, reserving, however, to himself a supreme and irresistible command over the whole. One of these angels, Saturninus held to be the ruler of the Hebrew nation, the being that brought them up out of the land of Egypt by the hand of Moses, and afterwards gave them a law, and whom the Jews, therefore, not knowing any thing of the Supreme Deity, ignorantly paid their adoration to as God. To Satan, or the ruler who presided over matter, this creation of the world and the human race was in the highest degree displeasing; wherefore, being stimulated by hatred and emulation, he contrived to introduce upon earth, in opposition to the human beings on whom the Deity had bestowed a rational and virtuously disposed soul, another race of men, created by himself out of matter, and endowed with a malignant and irrational soul like his own.

II.
 The philosophy of Saturninus.

own [g]. Hence was generated that astonishing difference which is found to exist between the

CENT.
II.

iii-
The philosophy of Saturninus.

[g] The principal ancient writers that have treated of the discipline of Saturninus are Irenæus *adv. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. xxiv. Tertullian *de Præscript. contra Hæret.* cap. xlvi. Theodoret. *Fabular. Hæret.* lib. i. c. ii. Eusebius *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. vii. Epiphanius *Hæres.* xxiii. p. 62. & Augustin. *in lib. de Hæresib.* c. iii. but by none of these has the subject been handled otherwise than in a confused, concise, and obscure manner. The consequence of this has been, that whenever modern writers have attempted to extract an account of the philosophy and religion of this Syrian from any of the authors above-mentioned, they have been sure to fall into errors, and conjure up for themselves difficulties where none in reality exist. Those errors and difficulties I have made it a part of my business to correct and overcome, as far as the obscurity of ancient authors, and their irregular mode of narration would permit: and I will here lay before the reader a statement of those particulars in which I have found reason to differ from the commonly received opinion. (1.) That Saturninus assigned to the corrupt material principle, which he considered as having been co-eternal with the Deity, a peculiar prince or governor, is no where expressly stated by any ancient authors; from what they have left us on record, however, respecting his Satan, we may, I think, fairly collect as much. Saturninus taught, as must clearly be perceived by any one who shall attentively consider what is said of him by Irenæus, that Satan, upon discovering the human beings that had been formed by the creators of the world, and endowed with a rational soul by the Supreme Deity, went to work and created, out of matter, a man of a corrupt and opposite character. This Satan, Irenæus terms the “angel inimical to the creators of the world,” but more particularly “to the God of the Hebrews.” But, certainly, his very work bespeaks him to have been something greater and more powerful than an angel. The creators of the world were angels, but they possessed not the power of imparting to the human beings whom they had formed a rational soul. The men of their creation breathed and crawled about upon the face of the earth like worms, and had it not been for the commiseration of the Supreme Being, they never would have possessed that spark of life, a rational soul. But the power of Satan was such, that he could bestow on the man whom he created

C E N T. inhabitants of the earth; of whom some are of
 II. a sound and virtuously disposed mind, others of
 a radically

The philoso-
 phy of Sa-
 turninus.

ated an actual soul, a soul, perverse it is true, and naturally inclined to what is evil, but indisputably intellectual or rational. The ancient writers indeed do not expressly state this, but it is an inference that admits of no controversy. For wicked men, who are descended from that original man whom Satan created, are unquestionably endowed with a soul as much as good men, although it be a soul that naturally inclines them to evil. But this soul they certainly cannot have received from God, the fountain of nothing but what is good, and they therefore must have been indebted for it to Satan, their father. The Satan of Saturninus then, although an evil being, must have been equal in power to the Supreme Deity, and alike capable of animating bodies with a rational soul.

From these premises it follows, that we must believe Saturninus to have attributed to his Satan an independent existence coëval with that of the Deity, and likewise the command or controul of matter from all eternity. It is, moreover, to be supposed, that the soul with which Satan inspired the man that he had formed, was taken by him from the soul of matter. Wherefore, it should seem most likely, that Saturninus agreed with some others of the Gnostics in believing matter to be animated. (II.) That the Deity was not displeas'd with the world that had been created by the seven angels, is another circumstance as to which ancient authors are silent, but which may fairly be inferred from his having imparted to the men formed by these same angels a rational mind or soul. Having rendered the inhabitants of the world capable of living well and happily therein, it is impossible that the world itself should have appeared displeasing in his sight. Although, therefore, the world had been created without the knowledge of the Deity, yet, when it was perfected, he beheld it with approbation, and deemed it worthy of having its existence continued for a certain time. (III.) That Saturninus considered the Deity as having placed this world under the government of those who had framed it, reserving to himself, however, the supreme dominion and likewise the worship of mankind, is clear from what he taught respecting the defection of the founders of the world from God. If there had been no previous obligation or subjection, there could have been no desertion of duty or rebellion. Those of the learned are deceived, there-
 fore,

a radically vicious character inclining to every thing that is evil. The former derived their body from the founders of the world, their soul from the Supreme Deity; the latter derive both body and soul from Satan, the governor of matter [b]. That all these things were devised by way

C E N T.
II.

The philosophy of Saturninus.

fore, who represent Saturninus as having maintained that the founders of the world were originally evil beings; an error into which many have fallen with regard to the discipline of various others of the Gnostic sects. — The spiritual beings noticed by Saturninus are of three descriptions; the Supreme Deity, the angels who created the world, and Satan, the prince or governor of matter. The Supreme Deity he considered as essentially good, the Chief Good; the prince of matter as essentially evil; the creators of the world, the rulers or governors of the seven moveable stars, as neither essentially good, like the Deity, nor evil like Satan, but holding, as it were, a middle kind of character; that is, being endowed with free will, they were at liberty to follow either good or evil. (IV.) That Satan, or the prince of matter, was enraged with the founders of the world, and privily counteracted the designs of them and the Supreme Deity, by creating a depraved and malignant race of men, we find noticed by ancient writers; but as to the cause of his indignation and hatred, they are wholly silent, leaving this, like almost every other part of the discipline of Saturninus, but very imperfectly described. It will be no very difficult matter, however, to supply the deficiency in this instance from conjecture. Those seven angels, in their formation of the world, and replenishing it with inhabitants, had invaded the province of Satan, and drawn away matter from his dominion. Filled with indignation, as it was natural for him to be, at this, he, out of opposition, introduced upon earth a race of men of his own forming, by whom those who had been created by the angels might be continually vexed and tormented.

[b] Irenæus states expressly in lib. i. cap. xxiv. that Saturninus was the first of the Gnostics that divided mankind into two classes, the one naturally good, the other evil. The fact was, that he despaired of being able to account for all the evil in the world from matter alone, and therefore had recourse to the expedient of supposing all whose propensities appeared to be radically vicious to

C E N T. way of accounting for the existence of natural
 II. as well as moral evil, must be obvious to every
 one.

The Saturninian system of theology.

XLV. Upon his conversion to Christianity, Saturninus made it his endeavour to produce, as far as possible, a congruity between the religion that he had thus espoused and his former philosophical opinions. The way he took was to pretend that the founders and governors of the world had, after a certain period, rebelled against the Supreme Deity [i]. That in consequence

have been inspired with a wicked soul, and that the prince of matter had created this race of men and breathed into them a soul similar to his own, a soul naturally inclined to every thing evil and depraved, in order to prevent his being altogether excluded from any dominion over the world. But with regard to the tenets of Saturninus respecting the formation of the first men, Irenæus, like other ancient authors, speaks very indistinctly. He says, in a general way, *duo genera hominum plasmata ab angelis dicit*. Learned men have been hence led to conclude, that Saturninus conceived the founders of the world to have created bad as well as good men, and that, therefore, they must have been of an evil nature themselves. But to an attentive reader it must be obvious that he did not conceive wicked men to have derived their origin from the same parents as had produced the good, but that they were the children of Satan.

[i] Respecting this sedition of the founders of the world, which Saturninus represented as the cause of Christ's advent, Irenæus thus expresses himself; *Et propter hoc quod dissolvere voluerint patrem ejus* (of Christ) *omnes principes* (of the world) *advenisse Christum ad destructionem Judæorum Dei, &c.* At the first sight, certainly, this may appear particularly obscure; but it will not long embarrass any one who is acquainted with the discipline of the Gnostics. The creators of the world, being elated with pride, conceived a wish to be themselves considered as gods by the human race, and, in consequence of this, became desirous of extinguishing all knowledge and worship of the Most High amongst men. By *Patrem Christi dissolvere*, therefore, Irenæus means arrogating to themselves that which was due to God

quence of this, Christ, the Son of God, had descended from above and taken upon him a body, not indeed a true or real body composed of depraved matter, but merely the shadow or resemblance of one. That the cause or purpose for which Christ came into the world was, that he might overthrow, not only the dominion of the founders of the world, but also that of Satan, or the prince of matter, and his satellites: he was, moreover, to destroy those ministers of Satan, the men of his creation; and finally to liberate and bring back to God the good men, in whom existed a divine soul [k]. The moral discipline

CENT.
II.

The Saturnian system of theology.

God alone, and extinguishing in men's minds all knowledge of the Supreme Father: The orthodox Christians and the Gnostics were in perfect agreement as to this, that the worship of a plurality of gods, which at the time of Christ's appearance, prevailed nearly throughout the world, had been introduced by a set of proud spiritual beings, unjustly covetous of divine honours; and that the gods, therefore, whom the nations worshipped, had a real existence, and were, in fact, evil dæmons. But there was this difference between the Gnostics and other Christians, that the former reckoned the God of the Jews as one of those apostate spirits who were desirous of withdrawing men from the worship of the true and Supreme God; and conceived that the creators of the world, whom they distinguished from the Supreme Deity, were the principal authors of this grievous iniquity; whereas the latter believed that certain evil angels, who had themselves previously rebelled against the true God and only Creator of the world and every thing in it, and who, in consequence of such their rebellion, were suffering under a severe, but well-merited, punishment, had instigated men to withhold their worship from the true and Supreme God, and bestow it on natures hateful in his sight.

[k] This view of the Saturnian discipline, it must be acknowledged, is mutilated and defective in almost all its parts; but the fault must rest with the ancient writers who have not left us the means of rendering it more perfect. A few things, however, may be added as obviously deducible from the

C E N T.
II.The Saturnian system
of theology.

discipline prescribed by Saturninus to his followers was rigid and austere. Regarding matter as inherently corrupt, and the body, therefore, as the seat of all vices, he enjoined an abstinence from wine, flesh, and every aliment that might tend to recruit or invigorate the corporeal frame; so that the body, being extenuated and brought low, the mind might, with the

the tenets above noticed. As Saturninus would not admit that Christ took upon him a real body, he must of necessity have denied his having been seized and ill-treated by the Jews, his having suffered on the cross, and also his resurrection from the dead. His belief must therefore have been, either that some other person underwent capital punishment in Christ's stead, or that it was merely some semblance or shadow of Christ that appeared on the cross. The object of Christ's advent, according to Saturninus, was, that he might restore to mankind that knowledge of the Supreme Deity which they had unfortunately lost. It is evident, therefore, that he had no idea of an expiation of sins through Christ, but conceived, according to the leading principle of Gnosticism, that *γνώσις*, as it was termed, or a knowledge of the Supreme Father of the universe, and a thorough contempt for the false gods that were worshipped by the world at large, were alone sufficient to the obtaining of salvation. None of the human race, however, he contended, could attain to a knowledge of the Deity but those on whom the Supreme Being had conferred a divine soul. The far greater part of mankind, therefore, having, according to him, been endowed by Satan with an iniquitous mind, were, of course, incapable of deriving any benefit from Christ. Those who received Christ were the good; and the minds of these being illuminated with a knowledge of the true God, reverted, on the dissolution of the body, to the celestial father, the body itself returning to matter, from whence it had been first taken. Those who rejected Christ were the wicked; and these Saturninus considered as destined to perish altogether; the body itself being resolved into matter, and the evil soul which animated the body returning to the soul of matter from whence it was originally taken. None of the Gnostics, it may be remarked, seem to have been aware of any other end for which Christ came into the world, than that he might overthrow idolatry and revive amongst the human race a knowledge of the true God.

greater

greater readiness and alacrity, perceive and worship the Supreme Deity. He was also averse to marriage, inasmuch as its object was the propagation of bodies [1]. In what way, or by what authorities Saturninus supported his tenets and

C E N T.
II.

The Saturninian system of theology.

[1] Irenæus does not say that all the followers of Saturninus abstained from animal food, but merely that many of them did so, and that not a few weak persons were vastly captivated by this sort of self-denial. It appears then, that Saturninus either left his disciples at liberty to abstain from animal food or not, according to their pleasure, or that he did not prescribe a course of discipline equally harsh and severe to all. Of the two, the latter strikes me as the most probable. His followers, I should conceive, were arranged much in the way that was afterwards adopted by Manes and others, *i. e.* divided into disciples of the first and second class. The latter, not aspiring to any very superior degree of sanctity and virtue, although they never exceeded the bounds of sobriety and moderation, yet made use of the same kinds of bodily aliment as other men; but the former, being anxious to dispel those clouds with which the mind was subject to be enveloped from its connection with the body, and to arrive at a clearer knowledge of the Deity, allowed themselves no sort of bodily sustenance, except of the most slender kind. After this manner also, ought we, I think, to understand what is said by ancient writers of the Saturninians having been prohibited from marrying. For although Irenæus states these men to have looked upon marriage and generation as of Satanic origin, from whence it necessarily follows that they must have regarded all sexual intercourse as absolutely unlawful, it is with difficulty I can bring myself to believe that Saturninus allowed none of his disciples to marry. All leaders of sects make it their principal object to collect together as many followers as possible. But sects whose leading principle it is to subdue, and even stifle altogether, the instincts of nature, can never become numerous or extensive, but after existing for a while in a low dwindled state, are sure to fall to decay. With a view to prevent this otherwise inevitable consequence, the founders of those sects whose moral discipline was particularly rigid and austere, were accustomed, for the most part, to exact an implicit conformity to their rules, merely from such as were meant to stand forth as an example to others; the rest were left much at liberty to consult their own natural inclinations. The Saturnian sect appears

C E N T. and doctrine we are altogether uninformed. It appears however that the code of the Old Testament, which we know to have been held in reverence by the Gnostics, was rejected by him on the ground of its having been compiled in part by the creators of the world, and in part by the prince of matter, or Satan.

The philosophy of Basilides.

XLVI. Nearly about the same time that Syria, and more particularly its chief city, Antioch, was infested and disturbed by the wild theories of Saturninus, an Alexandrian philosopher of a similar genius, named Basilides, was endeavouring to introduce amongst his countrymen and the inhabitants of the various provinces of Egypt another form of religion, differing widely from the principles entertained by the Christians at large [m]. His system took for its basis certain points

appears never to have extended itself beyond the confines of Syria; it should also seem to have been but of short duration.

[m] Basilides and his sect are treated of by all those ancient authors that have written on heresies, and whom we have above referred to when speaking of Saturninus. But since most of them merely copy, and not unfrequently incorrectly, from Irenæus, we shall direct our attention principally to him. It may not be amiss, however, occasionally to turn to those authors who, in treating of other matters, have here and there incidentally adverted to Basilides or his tenets, the principal of whom is Clement of Alexandria, who had read the books written by Basilides and his son Isidore, and in his *Stromata* cites many passages from them in the very words of the authors themselves. For Basilides himself wrote four and twenty books of commentaries on the gospel; and his son left behind him exhortations, moral precepts, and a variety of other things. None of these works, it is to be regretted, are at this day extant. We have also to lament the loss of a copious confutation of the abovementioned work of Basilides by Agrippa Castor, a very celebrated and erudite Christian writer of this century. From the passages cited out of the books of Basilides by Clement, it is easily to be perceived that the man

CENT.
II.The philoso-
phy of Basi-
lides.

points which, in common with Saturninus and the rest of those who were addicted to the oriental philosophy, he assumed as indisputable, namely, that there had eternally existed a Deity of the very highest excellence, of a nature, in fact, beyond all human conception; that matter had also an eternal existence; that it was

man was neither destitute of gravity, nor of an appearance of great piety towards God: For he writes in a very decorous and religious style. His manner of diction, however, is obscure and out of the common track, so that there is occasionally a difficulty in getting at his meaning. Nor is his adversary Clement, in many instances, at all more intelligible. Indeed he, not unfrequently, is so unfortunate as to involve the maxims which he assails in still greater obscurity, and seems to enter the lists against things which he does not sufficiently understand. Turning to more modern writers, in addition to what is to be met with in the ordinary ecclesiastical historians, and the *Dissertationes in Irenæum* of Ren. Massuetus, it will be found that great care and industry have been exerted in digesting and illustrating the tenets of Basilides by Isaac Beausobre in his *History of the Manichees*, vol. ii. p. 8. et seq. Basilides is ranked by this writer amongst the precursors of Manes; and not improperly so, in my opinion, if by the title of "precursor" we are to understand one who builds his discipline on the same foundation, and consequently has many tenets in common. Beausobre, however, in other respects unquestionably a man of the first eminence, may well be complained of in this, that although he cannot deny Basilides to have entertained errors of the most flagrant nature, he yet consumes much time in exculpating him, and setting him off to advantage. The labour however is, in not a few instances, altogether thrown away. Basilides flourished nearly at the same period with Saturninus, that is under the reign of Hadrian, and died, according to the *Chronicle* of St. Jerome, at Alexandria, about the time that Barchocheba, the pretended Messiah of the Jews, was endeavouring to bring about a revolution in Palestine. The ancient Christian writers who, without a shadow of reason, feign to themselves a regular succession of heretics similar to that of the Grecian philosophers, represent Basilides also as having been a disciple of Menander the Samaritan; but what we have remarked above respecting Menander must, we conceive, be sufficient to prove this altogether unfounded.

animated,

C E N T. animated, and intrinsically corrupt; and from
 II. these premises it necessarily followed that the
 The philoso- frame or machine of this world could not have
 phy of Basi- been the work of the Deity, inasmuch as he was
 lides. totally estranged from every thing evil [n]. The
 nature of the Deity, however, together with the
 origin of this world, and of the human race,
 was explained by him after a more diffuse and
 subtle manner than by Saturninus, in conse-
 quence of his calling in the assistance of the
 Egyptian philosophy. His doctrine was that the
 Deity had, long before the foundation of the
 world, begotten of himself seven natures of the
 most exalted kind, or, as the Gnostics termed
 them Æons, who, together with the Deity, from
 whom they proceeded, constitute a perfect and
 supremely blessed *Ogdoad* [o]. Of these Æons
 two

[n] From what is handed down to us by ancient writers respecting the tenets of Basilides, there is nothing to be collected that can authorise us in concluding that, like the rest of the Gnostics, he considered matter as being under the dominion of a ruler or prince peculiar to itself, or that he believed in the existence of angels naturally inclined to evil. For every thing that has occurred respecting the world and the human race he apparently refers to three causes alone; namely, (I.) The Supreme Deity, of whom it is impossible to form any adequate conception; (II.) Depraved matter; and (III.) The creators of this world.

[o] Irenæus mentions six Æons only, as having been recognized by Basilides; viz. the Deity himself, or the *Father*, *Nus*, *Logos*, *Phronesis*, *Sophia*, and *Dynamis*. But Clement of Alexandria, *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 637. adds two more, *Justitia* and *Pax*, and expressly states that Basilides held the divine family to be composed of eight individuals. In regard to this subject two questions suggest themselves. First whether these Æons are to be considered as persons truly and really distinct from each other? or whether they ought not rather to be regarded as merely virtues or attributes of the Supreme Being, and that it was in thought or imagination alone that Basilides separated them from the Deity, and gave them the form of persons? The latter opinion is espoused by Ren. Massuetus, *Dissert. in Irenæum*, l. p.

two of the feminine sex, if any conclusion is to be drawn from their names, *viz.* *Sophia* and *Dynamis*,

CENT.

II.

The philosophy of Basilides.

I. p. 38. and Isaac Beaufobre, *Hist. de Manichee*, tom. ii. p. 6, 7. as well as by some others. And without doubt it appears to be, in a certain degree, favoured by the names which Basilides gives to his *Æons*, inasmuch as they are those by which certain of the virtues or attributes of intelligence and will are denoted. There is a circumstance, however, which, I am free to own, draws me over entirely to the other of these opinions, and that is, that the *Æon* next in point of rank to the Father, namely, *Nus*, cannot possibly be regarded in any other light than as a distinct person. For this *Nus* is represented as the son of the Supreme Father, and as descending to this world for the purpose of liberating captive minds. Such then as he is, who holds the chief station in this divine family, must unquestionably all those who follow him be; nor can any reason whatever be assigned for our thinking otherwise of them, except it be what we have above noticed respecting their names: from whence, however, no conclusion on the subject can properly be drawn, since it is certain that many of the Gnostics whose *Æons* it is impossible for us to regard in any other light than as real persons, distinct from each other, and from the Supreme Deity, gave to such of their *Æons* names of a similar nature and description with those above enumerated. The second question is, whether the *Æons* of Basilides, like those of Valentine and others of the Gnostics, were of different sexes, and whether they were conceived to have intermarried with each other? Referring to their names we find some of them masculine, others feminine: but there are not so many masculine as feminine names in his catalogue; neither does Irenæus or Clement, or any other ancient author represent Basilides as teaching any thing respecting the marriages of his *Æons*; which certainly seems to indicate his having entertained notions less gross, as to this point, than some others of the Gnostics. But from acceding to this opinion we find ourselves recalled by Clement, who, after giving us the tenets of Basilides respecting the origin of the world in his own words, subjoins this, moreover, as one of his principles; Ὅσα ἐκ συζυγίας προέρχεται, πληρώματα ἐσιν ὅσα δὲ ἀπὸ ἑνός, εἰκόνας. *Quæcumque ex conjugatione procedunt, pleromata sunt: quæcumque autem ab uno, imagines sunt.* *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 603. In this passage *pleroma* must be understood to have the same meaning with *Æon*. This is evident from the words of

C E N T.

II.

The philo-
sophy of Basi-
lides.

Dynamis, or wisdom and power, generated of themselves certain princes or angels of the first order. These latter having founded for themselves an habitation or heaven wherein to dwell, begat certain other angels of an order somewhat inferior to their own; who, in like manner, having constructed an heaven for themselves, became the parents of a third order of angels. These fabrications of heavens and generations of angels, were by degrees multiplied to such an extent that they at length came to correspond with the number of the days in the year, no less than three hundred and sixty-five heavens, and as many different classes of angels, having been successively called into existence [p]. All these heavens were supposed to be under the
the

Basilides himself, as quoted by Clement just before, where we find him expressly making use of the term *αἰών*. For as by a figure of rhetoric, those natures which inhabit eternity are denominated *Æons*, so also those who dwell with the Deity in the *Pleroma*, or place of his peculiar residence are termed *Pleromata*. Basilides, therefore must be understood as saying that an *Æon* could be generated in no other way than as the human race are; namely, *ἐκ συζυγίας*, from an intercourse of the sexes. But if this was his doctrine, it is clear that his discipline could not have materially differed from that of the rest of the *Gnostics*; and that the account given of it by ancient writers is far from being perfect or complete.

[p] That such was the doctrine of Basilides, has, I believe, hitherto been universally credited on the faith of Irenæus, who, explicitly enough tells us that it was so, *adv. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. xxiv. Nor do I myself entertain the least doubt of the thing, inasmuch as I know that other notions very nearly resembling these ridiculous fancies were cherished by the Egyptians, amongst whom Basilides was born and educated. Beaufobre, however, in his *Histoire de Manichee*, tom. ii. p. 9. will have it to be impossible that Basilides could have been so utterly absurd and irrational as seriously to maintain the existence of three hundred and sixty-five heavens, and an equal number of angelic orders. But in
justification

the dominion of a Supreme Lord to whom Basilides gave the name of "Abraxas;" a title that should seem to have comprehended under it little more of mystery than this, that the Greek letters of which it is composed, if taken as numerals, will be found to express the number of the Basilidian heavens, *viz.* 365 [7]. The last,

CENT.
II.
The philosophy of Basilides.

justification of his incredulity he can alledge no other reasons than these: — The opinion is in itself childish and absurd: — it could therefore never have entered in the mind of Basilides. Basilides was an astronomer: — but it is incredible that any astronomer should have believed in such a multitude of heavens: — the thing, therefore, could not have been believed by Basilides. Now that reasons such as these should, for a moment, have had any weight with a man of quick capacity, is to me a matter of astonishment; for nothing surely can be more devoid of force; and if they be once admitted, the greatest part of what ancient writers have handed down to us respecting the Gnostics must, of necessity, be rejected as unworthy of belief. Great indeed might have been the force of these arguments had Basilides been a wise man and a skilful astronomer: but so far from this having been the case, it is admitted, even by those who wish the best to him, that he was a man of weak judgment, and fettered, in no trifling degree, by the trammels of superstition. But to what purpose should we multiply words? If his dogma respecting the number of the heavens stood unsupported by any circumstance else, it would be placed beyond the reach of controversy by the name "Abraxas" alone, which he gives to the Supreme Lord of those heavens, and which contains within itself precisely the number 365.

[7] That the name "Abraxas" or "Abrafax," for it is spelt in both ways, was considered by Basilides as a sacred word, and was applied by him to a certain nature of the most exalted order, admits not of the least doubt. But what this nature was, as also what was the origin and meaning of this appellation, is a matter of much obscurity, and one that has consequently given rise to a great variety of conjectures and disputations amongst the learned. Irenæus, from whom all the rest appear to have borrowed what information they convey respecting this controverted word, touches on it but very briefly, lib. i. c. xxiv. § 7. *Esse autem*, says he, *principem illorum* (of the 365 heavens) ΑΒΡΑΧΑΣ ,

C E N T.
II.The philoso-
phy of Basi-
lides.

last, or three hundred and sixty-fifth of these heavens, being situated immediately on the confines

et propter hoc cclxv. numeros habere in se. From these words two things are to be collected. First, that the Supreme Lord of the heavens had this title applied to him by Basilides: and secondly, that his reason for so applying it was, that if the letters of which it is composed be taken as numerals, or in an arithmetical sense, they exhibit the number 365, and therefore, in a certain degree, express the function and dignity of the Supreme Lord of all the heavens. It is not, however, stated by Irenæus, and I would wish the reader particularly to attend to this, nor by any other ancient Greek or Latin author, that this name was invented or first thought on by Basilides. The second point which we gather from Irenæus, inasmuch as it receives the strongest confirmation from the very word itself, which, in reality, if the letters composing it, be taken as numerals, will be found to express the number 365, appears to be admitted with scarcely any exception by the learned of the present day; and although there are not wanting eminent men who think that this word was looked upon as possessing some other power besides its numeral force, and who have endeavoured by a reference to the ancient Egyptian and Greek languages, or in some other way to ascertain what it was, they have never yet been able to bring forward any thing bearing the least semblance of truth or respectability, in support of their opinions. See Bern. de Montfaucon, *Palæograph. Græc.* lib. ii. cap. viii. Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iii. p. 700. Paul. Ernest. Jablonsky, *de Nominis Abraxas Significatione*, which last the reader will find in the *Miscellan. Nov. Lipsiens.* tom. viii. § xi. p. 88. & seq. Let us then content ourselves with that which is apparent, and not waste our time in searching after things that, in all probability, we shall never discover. With regard to the point first above alluded to as deducible from the words of Irenæus, we find it giving rise to great diversity of opinion amongst men of the most eminent abilities, by whom a very learned warfare has been carried on as to who that prince or Supreme Lord of the heavens was, to whom Basilides gave the name of Abraxas. Those ancient writers who lived nearest to the time of Irenæus assert that by the term Abraxas was meant the Supreme Deity; and to this the greater part of more modern authors, without hesitation, assent. But the writers of ancient times, as well as those of modern days, who give
this

lines of eternal matter, the prince of those angels whose dwelling this nether heaven was, conceived

CENT.
II.

The philosophy of Basilides.

this interpretation to the words of Irenæus, manifestly run into the error of expounding the discipline of Basilides upon orthodox principles. With Christians of the true faith, the creator and ruler of the heavens is one and the same with the Supreme Deity; but the opinion of Basilides was of a very different complexion. According to him, the three hundred and sixty-five heavens were neither framed by the Supreme Deity, nor were they at all subject to his dominion or controul. His belief was, that the angels were the fabricators of the heavens, and that the government of these celestial abodes rested with those who had thus framed them. Besides there is another thing which deprives this ancient opinion of all weight or authority. Basilides maintained, that the Supreme Deity had no name, and would never countenance his being spoken of under any other title than that of "the Father." We have the express testimony of Irenæus as to this, who states that the Supreme Deity was styled by Basilides, *innatus et innominatus Pater*. He must therefore have been inconsistent with himself had he, after this, given to the Deity any specific title. Another opinion was started in the last age by John Chifflet who, in his *Comment. ad Gemmas Basilidianas*, p. 58. contends that, by the title Abraxas was signified the sun, who completes his annual circuit in three hundred and sixty-five days. This opinion has been adopted by several of our later writers of the first reputation, and amongst others, by the very learned Isaac Beaufobre who, in his *History of the Manichees*, tom. ii. p. 51. has, with great ability and learning, brought forward various new arguments and reasons in its support. But in addition to not a few other things, in which these arguments are defective, it is particularly deserving of remark that they assume it for a fact, but fail altogether in proving that Basilides regarded the sun as the prince or supreme lord of all the heavens. For my own part, after having considered every thing that has been handed down to us respecting the tenets of Basilides, with the greatest possible attention, I can find nothing whatever that should afford the least grounds for our even suspecting that he might conceive the sun to be the residence of that great angel whose empire he supposed to extend over all the heavens. Beaufobre, in all probability perceiving this, endeavours indeed to make the discipline of Basilides wear a

C E N T.

II.

The philoso-
phy of Basi-
lides.

conceived the idea of digesting the confused
mass that thus lay near him, and of forming
it

very different aspect from that which it exhibits as described by Irenæus and others, and contends that the idle conceit of a continued series of 365 heavens belongs to Irenæus and not to Basilides. But, as I have remarked above, he does this without any evidence or authority; and, after all, gains little or nothing by it in support of his hypothesis respecting the title Abraxas. For it still continues to be required that the fact of Basilides having attributed to the sun the government or dominion of the skies, and of his having in consequence thereof considered this grand luminary, or some all-powerful genius residing therein, as deserving of the most distinguished, not to say divine, honours, should be proved to us, not by Abraxean or Basilidian gems, that is, not by ænigmatical sculptures of which we have as yet received no explanation that can be depended on, but by passages from ancient authors. That eminent scholar Paul. Ernest. Jablonsky, however, has thought fit, upon the whole, to espouse this opinion, though not without exercising his genius upon it, and endeavouring to make it accommodate itself, in some measure, to the religion of the gospel, lest it should seem too extravagant for a Christian man to entertain. See his very learned dissertation *de Significatione Nominis Abraxas*, printed in the *Miscellanea Lipsiens.* Nov. vol. vii. He conceives that Abraxas meant the sun, and thinks that although this is not expressly stated by the ancient Christian fathers, yet that they occasionally give obscure intimations of it. § ix. Basilides, according to him, transferred this title to Christ, who in the sacred writings is compared to the sun, and, *Malach.* iv. 2. is termed the Sun of Righteousness. Abraxas therefore, was the name of Christ himself, and Basilides, in thus applying it, meant to instruct his followers that the long and anxiously expected Sun of Righteousness had appeared, and that grateful and acceptable year of the Lord, spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, lxi. 2. was begun. It would give me pleasure could I perceive that these things were as clear and well-founded as they are ingenious and pious. But the fact is, that there are many things assumed by this illustrious writer as established, which appear to me to be, by no means, placed beyond the reach of controversy. He assumes, for instance, that Basilides ascribed a divine authority to the books of the
Old

it into a world, and replenishing it with inhabitants. This design he, with the assistance of the

C E N T.
II.

The philosophy of Basilides.

Old Testament; which certainly was not the case, if any faith whatever is to be placed in ancient writers; — that the name Abraxas was first invented by Basilides; but no such thing is to be met with any where on record; — that those gems on which the name of Abraxas is to be found, and which are commonly termed Basilidian gems, were all of them of the manufacture of Basilides; a thing that appears to me altogether incredible; — that from these gems something certain and definitive may be collected; but which unquestionably admits of very considerable doubt. — In short, not only these, but a variety of other things are assumed by him, to which no one the least conversant in matters of antiquity can easily be brought to yield his assent; indeed, ingenuously to confess the truth, his whole hypothesis appears to me to carry with it an air of darkness and ambiguity, and to be by no means easy of comprehension. For my own part, laying aside all conceits and conjectures, however much they may be distinguished by erudition or acumen, I think that as to this point Irenæus alone is deserving of attention, and that it may be clearly enough collected from him who this Abraxas was that makes such a conspicuous figure in the Basilidian discipline. According to Irenæus this title was given by Basilides to the prince or supreme governor of all the heavens. Undoubtedly then this Abraxas could have been none other than the first and greatest of the angels that were generated of Sophia and Dynamis; he who, together with his associates, founded that first of the heavens which, in point of formation, took precedence of all the rest. His rule or government naturally extended itself over all the heavens that were subsequently formed, for he was the father of the angels that framed them, and, of course, had much the same kind of reverence paid him by these his progeny as was manifested for the Deity, by the Æons resident with him in the pleroma. He was therefore deservedly styled *Princeps Cælorum*, the prince or supreme lord of the heavens: and the discipline of Basilides recognizes no other prince of the heavens besides him. The name Abraxas which comprises the number 365, was peculiarly applicable to him, inasmuch as it was he alone that originated the whole 365 heavens; of which none would have existed had he not framed the first and highest of them, and likewise be-

C E N T.
II.The philoso-
phy of Basi-
lides.

the minor angels that were resident with him, at length carried into effect: but whether with
OR

gotten that inferior order of angels by whom the second heaven was made. A great abundance of ancient gems, bearing, in addition to divers other figures of Egyptian invention, the name or title of Abraxas, is at this day extant, and more of them continue to be every now and then discovered in various parts of Egypt. In addition to what is to be met with in other authors who have incidentally adverted to the subject, the reader will find a considerable number of specimens of these gems exhibited by J. Macarius in a treatise of his expressly dedicated to their illustration, and which was enlarged and published by J. Chifflet, Antwerp, 1657. 4to, under the following title, *Abraxas, seu de Gemmis Basilidianis Disquisitio*, as well as by Bern. de Montfaucon *Palæograph. Græc.* lib. ii. cap. viii. Relying upon what is stated by Irenæus and other ancient authors, that the title Abraxas was held sacred by the Basilidian sect, the learned have been almost unanimous in considering all these gems as of the manufacture of Basilides and his followers, and that they were distributed to his disciples in the place of amulets to guard them against poisons, witchcraft, and such-like ills: and hence amongst students of antiquity it has been usual to distinguish them by the title of Basilidian gems. Beaufobre, however, in his *Histoire de Manichée*, vol. ii. p. 51. has with much strength of genius entered the lists against this prevailing opinion, contending, that from the words and figures engraven on these gems, it is clear that, instead of being ascribed to persons possessing the least tincture of Christianity, they ought rather to be considered as the productions of men utterly unacquainted with the true religion, and the slaves of a most base and degrading superstition. With not a few the force of his arguments has prevailed: but amongst these we are not at liberty to reckon the eminently learned Jablonsky, who, in his dissertation already noticed, labours hard to overthrow Beaufobre's reasoning, and to uphold the common opinion respecting the Christian, and more particularly the Basilidian, origin of these gems. The fact is, that unless these gems be regarded as of Christian origin, Jablonsky's interpretation of the word Abraxas must inevitably fall to the ground. According to my view of the subject it seems impossible to deny Beaufobre this much, that no inconsiderable portion of these gems are of a nature that will not admit of our believing them to have come from
the

or without the knowledge of the Supreme Deity is uncertain. Of this, however, we are left in

C E N T.
II.

NO The philo-
phy of Basi-
lides.

the hands of any Christian workman, although, unquestionably, some of them exhibit certain marks or signs that may be considered as having somewhat of a distant reference to the Christian religion. For by far the greater portion of them carry on their face the insignia of the Egyptian religion, and are evidently the offspring of a superstition too gross to enslave the mind even of an half Christian. In my opinion therefore Basilides did not first devise or invent the title of Abraxas, but borrowed it, as he did a variety of other things, from the discipline of the Egyptian priests: nor is there, as I have already above observed, any ancient writer whatever that attributes the invention of this title to Basilides. Now let us, only for a moment suppose, that Abraxas was a title by which the Egyptians were accustomed, long before the rise of Christianity, to designate the ruler or chief of those dæmons or angels whom they believed to preside over the heavens and the stars, and we shall have no further to seek, either as to the nature or design of these gems, or the reason of their being inscribed with this name. It was an ancient opinion of the Egyptians that the dæmons who rule over the heavens and the stars, possess also no little degree of influence over human affairs, and that amongst them there are some who delight in the evils of the human race, and make it their study, either of themselves, or through the instrumentality of agents, to afflict mankind with diseases or other grievous ills. With a view then to defend themselves against these enemies and torturers, and to secure both body and mind from the calamities which evil spirits of this kind might meditate against them, these deluded people were accustomed to inscribe on gems the name of that dæmon whom they supposed to have the supreme command over all the heavens and their rulers, together with some additional letters or figures which they supposed to possess great virtues, and to hang these gems as amulets about their necks. Their notion was, (indeed the superstition is not even yet obliterated amongst the vulgar of the east,) that the evil dæmons, upon beholding the terrific name of their supreme lord and ruler, accompanied with the abovementioned mysterious words and figures, would find themselves incapable of working any harm to the person wearing this defence, and would consequently take to flight. Basilides, who was an Egyptian, transplanted this

C. E. N. T.

II.

The philo-
sophy of Basi-
lides.

no doubt, that Basilides did not conceive the form of this world and of mankind to have been first devised by these angels themselves, but that they worked after a model with which they had been supplied by Sophia, or Wisdom, one of the Æons [r]. The first of the human race, in

opinion, and the practice consequent upon it, into his system, with this difference only, that rejecting such figures or words as were profane, and would have been a scandal and disgrace to the religion that he had adopted, he, in their room, annexed to the title of Abraxas certain others more suitable to the Christian character.

[r] Basilides did not, like the other Gnostics, consider the architect of this world to be evil in his nature; but appears rather to have thought very highly of him, terming him, according to Clement, "the prophet and image of the True God;" to whom Sophia, or Wisdom, that is one of the Æons, communicated the model of the world and of the human race. *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 603. Nearly all the Gnostics, indeed, were agreed in this, that the founder or founders of this world did not themselves devise the fashion thereof, or of mankind, but in the formation of both had before their eyes that model of the world and of the human race which exists with God in the pleroma. In truth, it was impossible for Basilides, consistently with his tenets, to think otherwise than well of the Creator of the world, inasmuch as he deduced the origin of such creator through two Æons from the Deity himself, and consequently must have admitted of his bearing somewhat of an affinity or relationship to the divine nature. This creator of the world was not however considered by him as good after the same manner that God is good; namely, as being altogether incapable of meditating, or even conceiving any thing evil: but rather as possessing a middle kind of nature, and endowed with a freedom of will that might be turned either to a good or a bad account. From the Supreme Being nothing evil could proceed, from matter nothing good. But the angels who formed the world out of matter, or who were supposed to administer and govern it, had an equal power of inclining themselves either way, to good or to evil. This was the opinion of all the Gnostics who believed that the creator of the world, or as they termed him Demiurgus, was not originally of an evil

in addition to a body composed of matter, were possessed of a sensitive and concupiscent soul derived from the soul of the world. To this, through the benevolence of the Deity, was subsequently added an intelligent and rational soul, whose powers, however, were much impeded and diminished by that brutal soul which had been derived from matter [s]. The angels who framed

C E N T.
II.
The philosophy of Basilides.

evil nature: a circumstance that at once accounts for our finding Demiurgus extolled and spoken of in the most exalted terms by persons who in the next breath represent him as the author and cause of much mischief and calamity. The fact was, that they regarded him as a being of an excellent nature, but at the same time as one that had made an ill use of his liberty.

[s] Almost all the Gnostic sects considered man as possessed of two souls; the one brutal, and endowed merely with a perceptive libidinous faculty; the other rational, and gifted with wisdom and intelligence: the latter divine in its origin, the former earthly and derived from the soul of matter. Nor were different sentiments on the subject entertained by Basilides, of whom Clement expressly says, *Δύο γὰρ δὴ ψυχὰς ὑποτίτεται καὶ ἕτος ἐν ἡμῖν. Is ergo duas quoque in nobis ponit animas. Stromat. lib. ii. p. 448.* His son Isidore also wrote a particular treatise *περὶ προσφύθης ψυχῆς; de Anima adnata*, that is, concerning that soul which coalesces, or, as it were, unites itself in one with the rational soul, the concupiscent soul that is continually leading astray the intelligent soul with which it is associated in the body. From this work of Isidore's Clement quotes several passages. To the question however, of how it came to pass that a portion of the divine nature, a soul of reason and intelligence, should be condemned to a residence in this loathsome vitiated body? the Gnostics do not return an uniform answer. Of what might be the opinion of Basilides as to this, the learned profess themselves to be altogether ignorant. But to me it appears that all uncertainty on the subject is removed by Clement, who had read the books of Basilides, and who, after giving a long quotation from him, adds as follows; *Ἀλλὰ τῷ Βασιλείῳ ἢ ὑποδοῦσι; προαμαρτήσασαν φησὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐν ἑτέρῳ βίῳ τὴν κόλασιν ὑπομένει ἐνταῦθα. Sed Basilidis hypothesis dicit, animam, quæ prius peccaverat in alia vita, hic pati supplicium. Stromat. lib. iv. p. 600.* At the first I entertained
fome

C E N T.
II.

The philoso-
phy of Basi-
lides.

framed this world apportioned the government of it and its inhabitants amongst themselves in such a way as that each nation or people might have its peculiar president or ruler. The chief of these angels was represented as having made choice of the Jewish nation for himself, and given to it a law by the mouth of his servant Moses.

A rule of life and action was also prescribed to the various other nations of the earth by the angels to whose guardianship and government

some doubt as to whether these words referred to the souls of all mankind, or to those of martyrs alone. For the passage preceding them relates to martyrs only. But the words of Clement that immediately follow entirely remove this doubt, and render it evident that we ought to understand the passage as referring to the souls of the whole human race. The souls of men he divides into two classes; (I.) "The elect," or those of martyrs; (II.) "The common," or those of the ordinary description. The former he represents as receiving an honorary punishment in martyrdom, the latter as undergoing the punishment due to their offences. It is evident therefore, I think, after what manner Basilides accounted for the association of divine souls with gross material bodies. The greater part of these souls had been guilty of some grievous transgression in the regions above, and had consequently rendered themselves obnoxious to punishment. When the founder of this world, therefore, had created the human race endowed with nothing more than merely a sensitive soul, the Deity caused those other souls to take up their abode, for a season, in men's bodies by way of expiating their offence, and rendering themselves worthy of being restored to their former estate. And in this the Deity acted conformably to his goodness. For since these souls had, by their transgression, incurred an exclusion from the celestial regions, and rendered it impossible that they should ever be again received there without having made expiation, a way was pointed out to them, in the maintenance of a continual conflict with matter and the temptations of the sensitive soul, by which they might wipe away the remembrance of their offence, and once more cleanse themselves from every impurity and stain.

they

they had been respectively assigned. Finally, with a view to the preservation of the rational souls, or those that were of a kindred to the Divine Nature, the Supreme Deity had, according to Basilides, at various times sent to the different nations of the world legates and prophets from himself, who, by their exhortations and instruction, might prevent those souls from sinking altogether into a state of brutal insensibility [t]. The souls that were attentive and paid obedience to the calls of these divine missionaries, were, upon the dissolution of the material body, received up into the regions of felicity; but those which rejected the proffered benevolence were constrained to migrate into other bodies, either of men or brute animals, and there to take up their residence until they should become qualified for reascending to their pristine blissful abodes [u].

XLVII. When Basilides, overpowered by the divine lustre of Christianity, had been induced to enrol himself amongst the number of its votaries, he made it his study to bend and interpret its principles in such a way as that they

The Basilidian system of theology.

[t] The Basilidians pretended to be in the possession of the oracular communications of certain of these legates and prophets that had been sent by the Deity to the human race before Christ's advent. The prophecies of Cham, for instance, which are mentioned by Clement, *Stromat.* lib. vi. p. 642. the discourses of Barcabba and Barcophus, noticed by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. c. vii. p. 120. and other writings of a like description. All of these were forgeries, no doubt, but yet I think they must have been of some antiquity.

[u] Origen is my authority for stating Basilides to have believed in the migration of disobedient souls on the dissolution of the corporeal frame, into new bodies, either of men or brute animals. See his *Comm. in Matth.* tom. xxviii. p. 136. as also in *Rom.* v. p. 530. edit. Huetian. The principle also strictly accords with his other tenets respecting the human soul.

might

C E N T.
II.
The Basili-
dian system
of theology.

might appear rather to support than to militate against these his philosophic tenets. The cause of Christ's advent he maintained to be the defection of the founders and governors of this world from the Supreme Deity, the contentions and wars amongst themselves in which they were continually engaged, and the consequent utter depravity and miserable situation of the whole human race. Those eminently powerful genii, he asserted, who both created and govern the world, being endowed with the most perfect freedom of will as to the choice of either good or evil, inclined by degrees to the latter, and endeavoured to root out and obliterate all knowledge of the true God, with a view to get themselves regarded and worshipped by mankind as gods in his stead. They then engaged in wars amongst themselves, each one striving to extend the sphere of his own power [v]. The president

[v] To us of the present day all this may appear very silly and ridiculous; but it was not viewed in this light by the oriental nations and the Egyptians, from whom Basilides borrowed a considerable part of his system. An opinion had, from very remote antiquity, prevailed amongst the nations of the east, and was adopted by the Jews, that this world was governed by angels, and that each nation or people had its presiding or ruling angel. Whatever, therefore, might happen to any particular region, either of a fortunate or a disastrous nature, was attributed not so much to the earthly sovereign or prince of that region as to its angelic guardian and governor: the former, in every thing which he might do, whether good or evil, being considered as acting under the immediate incitement or instigation of the latter. Hence when kings and nations went to war with each other, the angels presiding over those nations were conceived to be the authors of such wars. For these celestial rulers were supposed to burn with a desire of extending the limits of their dominion and acquiring an increase of power, and, with that view,

dent or ruler of the Jewish nation, in particular, the chief angel of the whole, aimed at nothing short of universal sovereignty, his efforts being directed to the entire subjugation of his associates and the various regions of the earth over which they respectively presided. The consequences produced by this perturbed state of things were, that the true religion sunk into oblivion, men resigned themselves wholly to the dominion of depraved appetites and lusts, and every part of the earth groaned under an accumulation of calamities, crimes, and wretchedness. Touched with compassion on beholding souls of a divine origin involved in so much misery and distress, the Supreme Deity directed his Son, that is Nus, the first of the seven Æons begotten of himself, to descend on earth for the purpose of putting an end to the dominion of these presiding angels, particularly that of their superlatively proud and arrogant chief, whom the Jewish nation had learnt to venerate as a God. Having accomplished this, he was to revive amongst men the long lost knowledge of his father, and teach them to subdue the force of those turbulent and irregular appetites, which war against the soul. Taking upon himself, therefore, the form and semblance of a man, but without assuming a real body, the son made his appearance amongst the Jews, and entered on the duties of the function

view, to infuse into the minds of kings and nations a disposition to make war on other states. It is easy then to perceive in what sense we ought to understand what is taught by so many of the Gnostics respecting the angels occasioning disturbances in mundane affairs, stirring up wars amongst mankind, and bringing down a variety of afflictions and calamities on the human race.

that

CENT.
II.The Basilidian system
of theology.

that had thus been assigned him by his father, confirming the truth of his doctrine by miracles of the most stupendous nature. Enraged at this invasion of his dominion, the god of the Jews caused Christ to be apprehended and condemned to suffer death: but the latter, not being clothed with a real body of his own, adopted that of Simon the Cyrenian, who had been compelled to bear his cross, and transferred his form to Simon; so that instead of Christ it was Simon the Cyrenian whom the Jews crucified [w]. The souls that paid obedience

[w] In exhibiting a view of the tenets of Basilides respecting Christ, I have followed the example of every other writer of ecclesiastical history that I have seen, and taken for my guide Irenæus. I must, however, confess that it is exceedingly difficult, I had almost said impossible, to reconcile Irenæus's account with what Clement of Alexandria says respecting the Basilidian institutes, and the quotations which he gives us from the writings of Basilides himself. This was first noticed, I believe, by Ren. Massuetus, *Dissert. in Irenæum*, p. 61. But this author prefers the authority of Irenæus to that of Clement, and endeavours to give such an interpretation to the words of the former as would do away the above-noticed want of harmony between the two. In this, however, he is unquestionably wrong, since it is evident that in every thing respecting Basilides, Clement, who had actually perused the writings of the man himself, and who, being an Egyptian, had had the opportunity of witnessing on the spot the rites and observances of the Basilidian sect, which had its origin in Egypt, must be much more deserving of attention than Irenæus, who resided in Gaul, and must necessarily have obtained what information he might possess on the subject merely at second hand. Beaufobre, with more propriety, in his *Hist. de Manichée*, vol. ii. p. 24. & seq. deemed it best to turn his back entirely on Irenæus, and in eliciting the sentiments of Basilides respecting Christ, to depend wholly on what is to be met with on the subject in Clement. Clement, it may first be observed, adduces (*Stromat. lib. iv. p. 600.*) a passage from the writings of Basilides, in which he denies that Christ was with-
out

dience to the precepts and injunctions thus communicated to them from above, might expect,
upon

C E N T.
II.

The Basili-
dian system
of theology.

out spot or stain, and intimates, in no very obscure terms, that by his sufferings and death he merely made atonement to divine justice for his own proper sins. Basilides was one who detracted much from the sanctity and pre-eminence of the martyrs, who were extolled and venerated beyond measure by the Christians of his time, contending that the sufferings and evils which they endured, were inflicted on them by the just judgment of God on account of sins which they had committed either in the course of their lives here below, or else, before their coming into this world, in the regions above. To this error the orthodox Christians opposed the example of our Saviour, who, although he was in the highest degree holy and immaculate, was yet exposed to inexpressible sufferings, and underwent even death itself. By way then of getting rid of the force of this argument, Basilides had the temerity to assert that Christ, inasmuch as he was a man, could not have been immaculate or a stranger to every thing sinful. "Εἰ μὲν τοι σφοδρότερον ἐκβιάσαιο τὸν λόγον, ἱεῶν, ἀνθρώπων, ὄντιν ἂν ἐνομάσῃς, ἀνθρώπων ἵναί τε δίκαιον τε τὸν θεόν. Καθαρός γὰρ ἄδεις, ὡς περ εἶπε τις, ἀπὸ φύκῃ. *Quod si vero me vehementius urgeas, dicam, quemcunque hominem nominaveris, esse hominem, justum autem Deum. Nullus enim est mundus, ut ille dicit, a forde.* Basilides, we may observe, expresses himself with some caution, and with a view to avoid exciting ill-will, forbears making any direct mention of Christ by name. But Clement, who was in possession of his writings, says that he is treating ἀντικρὺς περὶ τῷ κυρίῳ — "openly of our Lord," and after some further remarks, adds, that such a man was deserving of the title of "atheist," inasmuch as he deified the devil, (θειάζων μὲν τὸν δαίμονα) and had the audacity to term our Lord a man obnoxious to sin, (ἀνθρώπων ἀμαρτήτικον). In making this accusation, however, Clement suffered himself to be carried into extremes, and has, in consequence, given to the tenets of Basilides a much darker colouring than belongs to them. Basilides never thought of deifying the devil, or any thing like it. He maintained indeed, that the founder or creator of this world was of divine origin; but this being was not, according to his tenets, the same with the devil, as Clement rashly persuaded himself, but a nature of the most exalted kind, although one that had somewhat deviated from the right path. But if Basilides held that Christ himself, inasmuch

C E N T.
II.The Basili-
dian system
of theology.

upon the dissolution of the body, to regain their original seats in the blissful mansions above; but

inasmuch as he was a man, could not be immaculate, how can that be true which Irenæus reports of his having maintained that Christ assumed merely the semblance or shadow of a body, and that Simon the Cyrenian was crucified by the Roman soldiers in his stead? To offend God by sinning, and to undergo the penalty of sin, a being must necessarily be clothed with a real body. The argument deduced from this passage of Basilides is seconded by what Clement says (*Stromat. lib. i. p. 408.*) of the Basilidians having been accustomed annually to commemorate the baptism of Christ with great devotion on the fifteenth day of the month termed by the Egyptians Tubi, which answers to the ninth or tenth of our January. No being could have undergone lustration or ablution by water but one invested with a real body. If Basilides therefore believed Christ to have been actually baptized by John in the waters of Jordan, it follows, of necessity, that his opinion must have been misrepresented by those who tell us that he maintained Christ to have taken on himself merely the semblance of a body. On these grounds it should seem that the commonly received opinion as to the tenets of Basilides, in regard to the point under consideration, must be given up. Basilides, like others of the Gnostics, made a distinction between Jesus and Christ. Jesus he accounted to have been a mortal born according to the ordinary course of nature, a man of great sanctity, but yet not free altogether from sin. Christ he regarded as one of the Æons, that is, the chief of those immutable natures that had been begotten of God himself. Piety having led the upright man Jesus to submit himself to the baptism of John, Christ, by the divine command, descended into him from the regions above. When this same Jesus was seized on by the Jews and condemned to undergo capital punishment, Christ departed out of him, and returned again into heaven, leaving Jesus at the mercy of his enemies who put him to death by crucifixion. In all probability Irenæus might transfer to Basilides a dogma peculiar to some other Gnostic sect, or attribute to the whole Basilidian sect and its founder an erroneous supposition entertained by merely a few of its members; or finally, be misled by authorities that were not to be depended on. Although I am persuaded that the case must be nearly as I have here stated it, I yet cannot help acknowledging

but those who neglected availing themselves of the proffered instruction, were destined to migrate

C E N T.
II.
The Basilidian system of theology.

that I was a long time held in doubt as to whether the two passages above cited from Clement were of sufficient weight to overthrow the authority of Irenæus, supported as it is by the consent of all ancient writers. For, to any one who shall attentively consider the words of Basilides as quoted by Clement, it may very naturally occur that possibly Clement might be mistaken in his application of this passage to our Blessed Lord, inasmuch as Christ's name is not mentioned therein. That a day, indeed should have been annually kept sacred by the Basilidians in commemoration of the baptism of Christ, has nothing in it absolutely irreconcilable with the account given by Irenæus. For since some of the Gnostics maintained that Christ, in appearance, was nailed to the cross, died, and rose again from the dead, it is very possible Basilides might have believed that the spectators were imposed on by a similar illusion in regard to his baptism. But my doubts were all removed, and I at once gave Irenæus entirely up, upon my meeting with a third passage in Clement, superior to the two above noticed, and of a nature that renders it utterly incapable of being reconciled with the tenets of Basilides, as stated by Irenæus. For in his *Stromata*, lib. i. p. 408. Clement has expressly left it on record that the Basilidians had disputes amongst themselves as to the particular day on which Christ died. All indeed were agreed that his death took place in the sixteenth year of the reign of the emperor Tiberius; but as to the particular day, some contended that it was on the 25th of the Egyptian month Phamenoth, others that it was on the 19th of the month Pharmuth, and others again that it was on the 25th of this latter month. Clement adds that there were some amongst the Basilidians who believed Christ to have been born on the 24th or 25th of the month Pharmuth. But how, let me ask, could there have been any disputes as to the particular day of our Blessed Saviour's birth or death amongst people who denied that Christ had ever been born or died at all? How could such people have maintained that Simon the Cyrenian underwent the punishment ordained by the Jews for our Lord? If what Irenæus states respecting the tenets of the Basilidians be correct, their disputes would have been as to the particular day of Simon's death; respecting the day of the death of Christ no dispute could possibly

C E N T.
II.The Basili-
dian system
of theology.

grate into other bodies, either of men or brute animals, until their impurities should be wholly purged

possibly have taken place amongst men who believed him never to have died at all. But in what way soever this ought to be understood, the doctrine which Irenæus states to have been taught in the Basilidian school is clear beyond a question; namely, "that it behoves men not to confess him who was actually crucified, but him who came in the form of man, and was supposed to have been crucified. — — — If any one confesses him that was actually crucified, he is yet a servant, and in bondage to those (angels) by whom the bodies of men were created; but whosoever shall deny him is freed from their dominion:" — Basilides made a distinction between the man Jesus and the *Æon*, the Son of the Supreme God, the Christ that descended into Jesus at the time of his baptism by John. When the Jews laid hold on Jesus, Christ withdrew himself from him, and left the man alone to encounter their fury. It was the man Jesus alone, therefore, divested entirely of the divinity, whom the Romans caused to expire on the cross. Wherefore, according to Basilides, it was wrong to place one's trust in him who was actually crucified, who was merely for a time the earthly tabernacle or abode of the Son of God, and who, when suspended on the cross, had nothing whatever of the divine nature remaining in him; but right reason required that salvation and happiness should be sought for in none other than that Christ by whose power alone the man Jesus had accomplished the various miracles that he wrought. A full and complete knowledge of the tenets of Basilides respecting the Saviour of the human race is what we have not the means of obtaining; but what his opinion was of the cause for which Christ came into the world is sufficiently apparent. Christ, he maintained, did not come for the purpose of expiating by his sufferings and death the transgressions of the human race, and making satisfaction to the divine justice in man's stead: for he immediately took his departure out of Jesus when the latter was about to undergo the punishment of death: and as to what Jesus underwent, he, as we have already seen, was deemed to have made atonement thereby merely for his own proper offences, not the sins of others; for being a polluted mortal himself, it was impossible that he could become a propitiatory sacrifice for other transgressors.

The

purged away. As for the body, a mass of corrupt and vitiated matter, no hope was to be entertained of its being ever restored to life again. Of the books of the Old Testament, which he conceived to have been composed, in part, by command of the prince of the Jewish nation, and in part at the instance of the other angels, Basilides could not, of course, have made any great account. What the books of the New Testament might be, of which he approved, is not at present known.

C E N T.
II.

The Basilidian system of theology.

He wrote a long explanatory comment indeed on the gospel, but whether the gospel, which he thus took upon him to expound, was one of those which we recognize as genuine, or a different one, is not altogether certain [x].

XLVIII. The

The only reason, therefore, according to Basilides, for which Christ came into the world, and for a time joined himself to the man Jesus was, that he might overthrow the dominion of the founders of this world, and particularly that of the God of the Jews, and by restoring to mankind the long-lost knowledge of the Supreme Deity, prevail on them to forsake the worship of those beings who falsely styled themselves gods; that he might moreover excite in men's minds such a determined opposition to those lusts which are generated of the body and the sensitive soul, as would eventually free them from all impurity, and thus qualify them, upon the dissolution of the corporeal frame, for re-ascending to the blissful regions above, from whence they originally sprang.

[x] Origen expressly says, that Basilides had a proper gospel of his own. *Com. in Luc.* p. 210. edit. Huetian. But as this is not imputed to him by Clement or any other ancient writer, I consider it as false. That the gospel, however, which he made use of, was in some respects different from ours, is what I can easily bring myself to believe. St. Jerome (*Proem. Comm. ad Titum,*) states, that of St. Paul's Epistles those addressed to Timothy and Titus were rejected by Basilides; nor is there any difficulty in crediting this.

C E N T.
II.

The moral
doctrine of
Basilides.

XLVIII. The moral discipline prescribed by Basilides, although founded, in some degree, in superstition, and supported rather by vain and empty subtleties than any true or solid principles, yet held out no encouragement to the irregular appetites and vices of mankind. The soul, he maintained, was possessed of a sufficient power or energy to overcome every incitement to evil, internal as well as external; and consequently that no man could become wicked except through his own fault. God, he asserted, would forgive no other offences but those which had been unknowingly and unwillingly committed, and considered even a propension or leaning towards any sin, in one and the same light with the actual commission of such sin. All this is so obviously repugnant to a licentious course of life and action, that it is impossible

The first of the Epistles to the Corinthians I collect to have been approved of by him from the passage cited by Clement. *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 509. But what I think more particularly deserving of remark as to this point is, that Basilides did not pretend that his tenets could be substantiated solely from those sacred writings which are in the hands of the Christians at large, but intimated that he had been beholden for them in part to other sources. A part, he said, he had learnt from the mouth of Glaucias, whom he described as having been the interpreter (*ἰερμνεία*) of St. Peter, meaning, as I suppose, one who was master of the sentiments or opinions communicated privately by St. Peter to certain select disciples, whilst another part had been derived immediately from St. Matthias. Vid. Clemens Alexandr. *Stromat.* lib. vii. p. 893. 900. His doctrine, therefore, like that of most others of the Gnostics, was, that the discipline propounded by Christ was of a two-fold nature; the one simple, popular, public, and to be collected from the writings of the New Testament; the other sublime and secret, received from our Saviour's lips by his apostles, and transmitted by them, not in writing, but merely by word of mouth, to certain disciples of known and approved fidelity.

for

C E N T.
II.The moral
doctrine of
Basilides.

for us to place any faith in the accounts of those ancient authors who represent Basilides as having countenanced the utmost laxity of manners amongst his followers [y]. The unfavourable suspicions that were entertained by many respecting the nature of his moral discipline, appear to have been excited in part by the infamous lives led by some of his disciples [z],
and

[y] Irenæus, St. Jerome, Epiphanius, and other ancient writers, represent Basilides as having granted to his followers the most perfect liberty of doing whatever they might list. They, in fact, state him to have recognised no distinction whatever between good and bad actions. But to this accusation we are prevented from giving credit by the passages cited from the writings of Basilides himself, as well as from those of his son Isidore, by Clement of Alexandria, in which the points of moral doctrine above adverted to, as well as others of a similar nature, are propounded in direct and express terms. Points like these could never have been maintained by one who gave the rein to every natural appetite, and indulged his followers in the practice of all kinds of iniquity. See Clemens Alexandr. *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 600. where we have the words of Basilides himself expressly declaring that “he who would commit adultery is an adulterer, although opportunity may have failed him; he who would not scruple to commit murder a murderer, although his hands may never have been imbrued in human blood;” which corresponds exactly with the doctrine delivered by Christ. See also lib. iv. p. 634. where he asserts that God will pardon no sins without punishment, “except such as may have been committed involuntarily or through ignorance,” which indeed is pronounced too harsh and severe, even by Clement himself. Finally, in lib. ii. p. 488. we have the words of his son Isidore severely rebuking those who, with a view of palliating their sins, say, “I found myself irresistibly compelled to do so and so; — in what I have done I have not acted willingly, I was seduced into it.” Men, he adds, by the assistance of the rational part, (that is the immortal soul of divine origin,) have it in their power, and ought to subdue the inferior creature (that is, the brutal sensitive soul).

[z] Clemens Alexandrinus, in his *Stromata*, lib. iii. p. 510. describes

C E N T.
II.The moral
doctrine of
Basilides.

and in part by the objectionable opinions which he maintained in regard to the lawfulness of concealing one's religion, of denying Christ in times of peril, of partaking of the flesh of victims offered to idols, of disparaging the estimation and authority of the martyrs, and peradventure as to various other points [a]. The Basilidian

describes the Basilidians who were resident at Alexandria in his time as being very debauched and dissolute in their manners. Some of them appeared to think that, having attained to the utmost summit of virtuous perfection, no further restraint on their appetites was necessary; others considered themselves as elected to salvation, and deemed it impossible for them, by any sort of transgression, to fall from that state of felicity. But Clement, as became an honest man and a lover of truth, adds, that these reprobate Basilidians gave a very wrong interpretation to the precepts of their masters, and opposes to them the very words of Basilides. Οἱ προπάτορες, says he, τῶν δογμάτων ἢ τὰυτὰ ἀντίοις πράττειν συγχωρεῖσιν. *Inventores sive patres dogmatum quæ probant, non potestatem illis fecerunt talia perpetrandi.* Clement therefore, although inimical to the Basilidian sect, yet found himself compelled in justice to acknowledge that neither in the writings of Basilides, nor in those of his son Isidore, was there any thing whatever that should countenance men in a sinful course of life, and that the dissolute conduct of the disciples could, in no shape be charged on the doctrine or precepts of the master.

[a] Nothing whatever excited a greater dislike to Basilides amongst the orthodox Christians than the sentiments entertained by him respecting the martyrs. By the unanimous voice of the Christian church the martyrs were exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and pronounced worthy of having almost divine honours paid to them; but, according to Basilides, their merits were, by no means, of a transcendent nature; neither ought any greater reverence to be paid to their memory than to that of other pious persons. The ancient writers indeed, who treat of the doctrine of Basilides are not strictly in unison with each other, neither do they all attribute to it the same degree of turpitude; but in this they are all agreed, that it was every way calculated to enfeeble and corrupt the minds of Christians, and seduce them

Basilidian sect flourished for a considerable time, and had not become altogether extinct even so late as the fourth century.

C E N T.
II.

The moral
doctrine of
Basilides.

XLIX. What-

them from that fidelity and allegiance which they owed to their divine master. Nor can any one doubt of this who shall attentively consider even those extracts alone from the writings of Basilides which are to be met with in Clement of Alexandria. The opinion entertained by him respecting the martyrs was connected, as must readily be perceived by any one who will compare together what is said by ancient writers respecting the morals and conduct of the Basilidians, with another and still more grievous error, namely, that it was lawful for Christians, not only to conceal and disguise their religion, but also, in case of life or fortune being brought into danger, even to deny and abjure the very name of Christ. The Basilidian doctrine, as to this point, is given us in the following terms by Irenæus (*adv. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. xxiv. p. 102.) with whom other ancient authors agree; *Sicut Filium* (that is Christ, who for a certain time joined himself to the man Jesus) *incognitum omnibus esse, sic et ipsos a nemine oportere cognosci. — — Quapropter et parati sunt ad negationem* (Christi) *qui tales sunt, immo magis ne pati quidem propter nomen* (Christi) *possunt, cum sint omnibus similes* (that is, because they live just in the same way as the heathen worshippers, and conform themselves in every respect to the manners of the people amongst whom they happen to reside). That men of a selfish turn of mind should readily have embraced this error, in those perilous times when the Christians were daily made to undergo punishments of the most horrible nature, and frequently had to meet death under all its terrific forms, cannot in the least be wondered at; and we are certain that it found acceptance with many, particularly the Gnostics. Nor were the Basilidians unsupplied with somewhat of a specious and imposing argument whereby to colour and extenuate this perfidious kind of conduct. For since they denied that Christ, the son of the Supreme Deity, ever actually coalesced in one and the same person with the man Jesus, and maintained that it was the man Jesus alone (Christ having quitted him) who suffered upon the cross, they might, without falsehood, affirm that they did not worship as the Deity, or the offspring of the Deity, him whom the Romans, at the instigation of the

C E N T.

II.

The system
of Carpo-
crates.

XLIX. Whatever might be the errors and depravity of Saturninus and Basilides, Alexandria produced,

Jews put to death, neither did they rely on him for salvation. Nay, they might have gone the length of adding, that they considered Jesus who was crucified, as a sinner, who had merited the grievous punishment that he underwent; for that such was their opinion is manifest from the words of Basilides which we have quoted above. And that they were accustomed, in defence of their conduct, to have recourse to some such quibbling as this, is plainly to be collected from Irenæus; who represents them as maintaining that “men ought not to confess him who was actually crucified,” (*i. e.* the man Jesus, out of whom Christ had departed previously to his being affixed to the cross,) “but him who came in the form of man, and was supposed to have been crucified.” Men professing sentiments like these might well remain safe and secure in the very midst of the enemies of Christianity, who had no idea, as appears from Pliny, that any Christian would revile Christ crucified. The distinction thus made between Christ and Jesus was a thing of which they entertained not the least conception. The Basilidians then, were particularly anxious, by every means in their power, to avoid being confounded with those Christians who were denounced by the Roman laws. This led them to do as well as submit to several things from which all true Christians would have recoiled with horror. One of these undoubtedly was that of being present at the pagan sacrifices, and partaking of the meats offered to false gods. Ancient writers cast this in their teeth with all imaginable rancour, but are entirely silent as to the motive; which may, however, readily be conceived from what we have noticed above. All true Christians made it a point, conformably to the injunction of St. Paul, never to be present at any of the sacrifices or religious feasts of the heathens, and considered it as an abomination to touch meats that had been offered to the pagan deities, circumstances which rendered their detection at all times extremely easy. The Basilidians therefore, who made security their study, had recourse to an opposite line of conduct, and neither scrupled to mingle with the heathen worshippers in their sacrifices, nor to feast with them afterwards in their temples on the remnants of the victims. If life or safety required it, they were also ready boldly to avow that they had nothing to do with Christ,

meaning,

produced, nearly about the same time, in the person of Carpocrates, a character by far worse than

C E N T.
II.

The system
of Carpo-
crates.

meaning, in this case, the man that was actually crucified, not the true Christ whom they supposed to have descended from above, and, after sojourning here on earth for a while, to have again returned to his Father's abode. By means of this their perfidious dissimulation they succeeded, according to ancient authors, in escaping the persecutions which befel the other Christians; and we, consequently, find no martyrs of the Basilidian sect. The Basilidians, in fact, were not in the least ambitious of martyrdom. This being cast in their teeth by the other Christians, who were accustomed to place no little part of their felicity and glory in the number of their martyrs, and to consider an eagerness after martyrdom as a characteristic feature of the true church, Basilides and his son retorted by assailing the credit of the martyrs, and maintaining that those Christians acted very unadvisedly who either professed a wish to pour out their own blood in the cause of Christ, or contended that a greater degree of sanctity and honour ought to be ascribed to the martyrs than to other Christians. By way of supporting himself in this opinion he assumed it for a fact, as appears from his own words, as cited by Clement, *Stromat.* lib. iv. p. 600. that the evils which men suffer in this life are nothing more than the punishment of offences committed by the soul either during its residence in the body, or in a previous state of existence. God being all just, he said, it was impossible that he should suffer an innocent and unoffending person to undergo pain and affliction; and we were therefore, of necessity, compelled to believe that men must, by their transgressions, have merited whatever calamities we may see befall them. This then being assumed, his conclusion was, that so far from attaching any peculiar degree of sanctity to the character of those Christians who were punished and put to death by the Romans on account of their religion, we should rather consider them as belonging to the class of those who, either in this life or in a previous state of existence, had grievously offended the Deity by their transgressions. In defence of this opinion he went, as we have above seen, the length of asserting that even Jesus of Nazareth himself, in whose body Christ the Son of the Deity for a while took up his abode, in being crucified underwent merely the punishment due to his own proper offences. The horror excited even by the bare mention of this

C E N T.

II.

The system
of Carpoc-
rates.

than either of these two, nay, a very monster of a man, if faith is to be placed in those accounts of his tenets and doctrine which are given us by ancient as well as more recent authors. To confess the truth, however, the more ancient writers have not only left us a very lame and unintelligible account of the Carpocratian system of discipline, but appear to have failed in arriving at any thing like a perfect comprehension of it themselves, nay, in some respects, to have actually misrepresented it, whilst at the same time, in regard to other particulars, they themselves seem to have been much misunderstood by more recent authors [b]. The philosophy

this doctrine in the minds of those Christians whose discipline was founded on the sacred writings, occasioned the author of it to be viewed by them in the most unfavourable light. By Basilides himself, however, the principle was not considered as unjustifiable or injurious to the Deity, inasmuch as, according to his foolish way of thinking, a distinction existed between Christ the Son of God and the man Jesus, Christ having been a compound of two persons, the one human, the other divine. That sentiments like these, differing so widely from what were commonly entertained, and apparently calculated to do away every kind of piety towards God, should have caused the Christians in general to think unfavourably of the whole moral discipline of Basilides, cannot in the least be wondered at, although it was certainly in great part far from being of that dissolute and unseemly character which was commonly attributed to it. Considerable grounds for suspicion were likewise afforded by the depraved and perverse lives led by many of the Basilidians, who, by an abuse of the precepts of their master, endeavoured to justify themselves in all manner of iniquity.

[b] For the religion of Carpocrates our leading authority is Irenæus, who in c. xxv. of his first book *advers. Hæres.* enters into the nature of it at much length, but in a manner by no means either comprehensive, distinct, or perspicuous. Respecting his moral discipline some few particulars are given

sophy of Carpocrates respecting the Deity, the world, and the nature of man, differed but little from the sentiments entertained on these subjects by the rest of those whom we commonly term Gnostics. He believed, for instance, that there existed a Deity supreme over every thing, and, in point of nature, infinitely beyond the reach of all human comprehension; — that of this Deity had been generated certain Æons or immortal and immutable natures; — that matter was eternal, and that it was the fountain or source of every thing evil and pernicious. He further held that the world had been founded by angels who, in point of nature, were far inferior to the Supreme Being; — that the rational souls of men had been sent down from the regions above into terrene bodies as into a sort of prison [c]; — that the found-
 ders

C E N T.
 II.
 The system
 of Carpo-
 crates.

given us by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 511. & seq. that appear to be deserving of credit, inasmuch as they were extracted from a book written by Epiphanes the son of Carpocrates, *de Justitia Dei*. What other particulars we find recorded by Epiphanius, Tertullian, Theodoret, and other hæresiologists, are partly transcribed from Irenæus, and in part collected from vulgar report; neither do they altogether accord with each other. It is utterly out of the power of any one therefore, to exhibit any thing like a correct and complete view of the Carpocratian system of religion in all its parts. Many things are wholly omitted by Irenæus, which it is impossible for us to supply, even in the way of conjecture, and on others he barely touches in a transient manner, without troubling himself to give us either comment or explanation.

[c] What the sentiments of Carpocrates were respecting the soul is very obscure and uncertain. Of this indeed, we are pretty well assured, that he considered the souls of men as of divine origin, and as having been sent down from above into these earthly bodies as into a prison: but as to what kind of nature he might attribute to them, or to what cause he might ascribe

C E N T.

II.

The system
of Carpo-
crates.

ders of this world, after extinguishing amongst mankind every knowledge of the true and Supreme Deity, had arrogated to themselves the title and honours of gods, and endeavoured by every means to prevent the souls imprisoned in bodies of matter from understanding that there was any nature of a more excellent or perfect kind; — that considerable assistance was afforded to them in this matter by a certain angel malignant in his very nature, that is the devil, whose study it is to draw over mankind from the true God to the prince of this world; — that the souls who are so unfortunate as to be thus seduced by this evil angel, upon their being released by death from one body, are constrained to migrate into another, whilst such as successfully resist his wiles, and those of the founders of this world, ascend, on the dissolution of the body, to God the parent of all souls. All this has nothing in it at all incredible, and sufficiently accords with those principles on which the whole Gnostic philosophy was built.

ascribe their being thus consigned to terrene bodies, we have no ground sufficient to warrant even a conjecture. There is however, a passage cited by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 513.) from the book written by Epiphaneus the son of Carpocrates, *de Justitia Dei*, from whence it appears that the latter conceived the souls of men to have had their appetites and instincts implanted in them by the Deity himself, not only those of an harmless or an indifferent nature, but such likewise as are unlawful and prohibited. Hence it is apparent, not only that his opinion respecting the original nature of the soul was a very extraordinary one, and vastly different from that entertained by the rest of the Gnostics, but also that he did not, like others of the Gnostics, conceive man to have been endowed with two souls, the one merely sensitive, concupiscent, and deduced from matter, the other rational, and free from every disorderly appetite.

L. An

L. Ancient authors, however, leave us entirely in the dark as to the mode in which Carpocrates endeavoured to make the Christian religion accommodate itself to these principles. The doctrine he taught is commonly reported to have been that Jesus was begotten of Joseph and Mary, according to the ordinary law of nature, and that he was superior to the rest of mortals in no other respect than that of having a more excellent soul residing within him, and being endowed by the Deity with certain qualities and virtues by means whereof he was enabled to overcome the power of the founders of this world. But there is not wanting abundant cause for suspicion that, as to this, his tenets have been misrepresented, and that, in point of fact, he, like other Gnostics, made a distinction between the man Jesus and Christ, considering the latter as one of the Æons, and son of the Supreme Deity [d]. With regard

C E N T.
II.
The Carpocratian theology.

to

[d] All the writers of ecclesiastical history agree in declaring that by none of the Gnostics was the character of our Blessed Saviour held in so little respect as by Carpocrates. Christ, if we may give credit to their statement, was considered by Carpocrates as having been a mere man, begotten of Joseph and Mary according to that law by which all other mortals are produced; but a mind of greater strength and dignity than usual having accidentally fallen to his lot, the Deity was pleased, in addition, to confer on him divers virtues to which other men were strangers, and commission him to enlighten the human race, and withdraw them from the worship of the founders of this world. That such were his sentiments they are led to believe from the following words of Irenæus; *Jesum autem (dicit Carpocrates) e Josepho natum, et cum similibus reliquis hominibus fuerit, distasse a reliquis secundum id, quod anima ejus firma et munda cum esset, commemorata fuerit quæ visa essent sibi in ea circumlacione, quæ fuisset ingenito Deo.* According to this, Carpocrates believed that the soul of Jesus, previously to its connection with the body, existed just in the same way as all other souls, with the

Deity

C E N T. to the cause however for which Christ was sent
 II. down by his Father to mankind, it is impossible,
 if

The Carpocratian theology.

Deity in the regions above, but that, on its being sent to occupy a body here below, it did not, like other souls, lose all remembrance of what it had known and understood in its former state, but having once obtained a clear perception of the truth, took care never again to lose sight of it, and consequently maintained for itself a superiority over other minds. This doctrine manifestly favours of Platonism, and the discipline of the oriental philosophers. For Plato, as is well known, held that a knowledge of the truth is implanted in the soul by nature, but that, upon its junction with the body, this knowledge is obscured, and an entire forgetfulness of every thing past takes place. Under the influence of this opinion, he maintained, that to enquire and gain knowledge is nothing more than to renew or recover the memory of things that had been before known but forgotten. When such a soul as Carpocrates conceived Christ's to have been, became united to the material body begotten of Joseph, it could not otherwise happen but that a man of an extraordinary and pre-eminent nature should be thereby constituted. Of the association of any third or divine nature with the body and soul of Jesus no mention occurs in these words of Irenæus: wherefore very learned men have been led to conclude that Carpocrates believed Jesus to have been a man composed of a mortal body and an immortal soul, and nothing more. This opinion appears to be corroborated by several things which are subsequently recorded by Irenæus. In the first place we find it stated by him that certain of the Carpocratians were so arrogant as to assert that they themselves were equal to Jesus, (*ut se Jesu dicant similes*), others so mad as absolutely to maintain that they were superior to him, (*fortiores eo esse*), inasmuch as they had received souls of the same degree and order as Christ's. But could it be possible, let me ask, for any thing peculiarly great or divine to be attributed to Christ by persons who were so sottishly vain as to imagine that they themselves were equal or even superior to him? It is in the next place stated by Irenæus that the Carpocratians had painted likenesses of Christ, as well as other representations of him, which they crowned, and held up to veneration in company with those of the philosophers Pythagoras,

if his other tenets be duly considered, that Carpocrates, could have believed it to have been any

C E N T.
II.

The Carpocratian theology.

thagoras, Plato, and Aristotle. When interrogated as to the way in which they had obtained these likenesses, they replied, that a portraiture of Christ had been painted by the command of Pilate. These things certainly seem to prove that Christ was considered by the Carpocratians merely in the light of a philosopher, and was placed by them on a level with Plato, Pythagoras, and the rest. But upon pursuing the thread of Irenæus's discourse, it appears to me that both ancient and modern writers have neglected to bestow a due degree of attention on his words, and in consequence thereof have failed in arriving at a just conclusion respecting the opinion which Carpocrates entertained of Christ: for which, however some excuse is certainly to be found in the brevity and obscurity of the writer's style. What I would remark is, that immediately after the words cited at the commencement of this note Irenæus goes on thus; *Et propter hoc ab eo (the Supreme Deity) missam esse ei (the soul of Jesus) virtutem uti mundi Fabricatores effugere possent, et per omnes transfressa et in omnibus liberata adscenderet ad eum.* Now allowing their due weight to these words, I cannot help feeling strongly inclined to believe that Carpocrates thought no less respectfully of Christ than Basilides and other Gnostics, and held that one of the divine Æons, (for the Gnostics term these *virtues*, in Greek *δυνάμεις*) descended into the man Jesus who, on account of the superior excellence of his soul, was, beyond all other mortals, deserving of such honour, at the commencement of his ministry, and continued with him during his progress; but that upon his being seized and condemned to suffer death, this Æon departed out of him, and re-ascended to the regions above. This, at the least, is evident, that Carpocrates recognised in Jesus three distinct parts; 1. a body begotten in the course of nature; 2. a soul sent down from the immediate residence of the Deity for the purpose of being associated with this body; and 3. a virtue divinely communicated to this soul on account of its superior excellence: which virtue, in all probability, ought to be accounted as one and the same with that Christ whom the leaders of the various Gnostic factions pretended to distinguish from the man Jesus. With regard, therefore, to what is reported by Irenæus as to some of this sect hav-

C E N T.
II.The Carpo-
cratian theo-
logy.

any other than that he might abolish the wor-
ship of a plurality of gods, or to speak after
the

ing accounted themselves equal to Jesus, and the whole of them having placed him no higher than on a level with the philosophers, it must be considered as not referring to *the virtue* which for a time resided in Jesus, or to Christ the Son of the Deity, but merely to the man Jesus taken in the abstract. This explication of the tenets of the Carpocratians respecting Christ, derives no little confirmation from what Irenæus says of their having taught that souls were saved "through faith," *i. e.* in Christ, "and Charity." For if the sentiments entertained by Carpocrates respecting Christ were what they are commonly represented to have been, it is impossible to annex any sense or meaning to these words. How could *faith* in a mere man be held up as the means of bringing any one to salvation? Certain of this sect, we are told, made it a matter of boast that they were possessed of souls in no respect inferior to the soul of Jesus; nay, some even went so far as to assert that they were endowed with souls superior to that of Jesus. Both, therefore must have felt persuaded that they possessed within themselves the same power of successfully combating the founders of this world as Jesus Christ did. But if a faith in Jesus Christ, supposing them to have considered him merely as an eminent man, could, in their opinion have led to salvation, surely they must have believed that a faith in those men who were equal or even superior to Jesus Christ would be attended with equally beneficial consequences. But this would have been contradicting themselves, inasmuch as it would have been admitting that a faith in Christ was not absolutely necessary to salvation. But if Carpocrates made a distinction between Christ and the man Jesus, as I think he did, we may readily perceive in what sense he might say "that salvation was obtained through faith in Christ." In such case there can be no doubt but his meaning must have been that a faith in that Virtue, or Æon, the Son of the Supreme Deity, who animated and governed the man Jesus in the execution of his divine commission here on earth, would obtain from the father celestial happiness for all such souls as might be possessed of it. What we have thus suggested will receive also considerable illustration and support from the following words of Irenæus, if properly attended to. *Jesu autem dicunt (i. e. the Carpocratians) animam in Jude-
orum*

the manner of the Gnostics, put an end to the dominion of the founders of this world, and after

C E N T.
II.

The Carpo-
cratian theo-
logy.

orum consuetudine nutritam contempisse eos (the founders of this world) *et propter hoc virtutes accepisse, per quas evacuavit quæ fuerunt in pænis passiones, quæ inerant hominibus.* Commentators, as is not unusual with them, have passed these words of Irenæus over without remark, although they certainly call for attention and explanation far beyond many others on which an abundance of pains has been bestowed. For any illustration of this passage therefore we are driven to depend wholly on ourselves. It may be remarked then, (I.) that Irenæus here represents Carpocrates as having taught “that the soul of Jesus contemned the fabricators of this world,” or those angels who made this world, and hold dominion over it: which is much the same thing as if he had said, that Jesus did not worship those gods whom the nations of the earth held in reverence, but confined his adoration to the one only True and Supreme Deity. (II.) It is added as the reason why the soul of Jesus entertained a contempt for the founders of this world, — *quod Judæorum consuetudine nutrita esset*: that is, the Jews held the gods of the nations in contempt, and worshipped only one Deity, therefore Jesus, who was born and educated amongst the Jews, was led to do the like. I shall not stay to remark that what is thus stated corresponds but ill with the account which Irenæus just before gives us of the Carpocratian tenets respecting the virtue and fortitude naturally belonging to the soul of Jesus, or that it reflects but little honour on the character of Jesus: but I cannot pass over this, that if the doctrine of Carpocrates be rightly conveyed in these words, he must have excluded the God of the Jews from the number of the angels who framed this world, and regarded him as the Supreme Deity; which, if it were true, would separate him widely indeed from all others of the Gnostics. For if the soul of Jesus, in worshipping one God alone, and treating with contempt the founders of this world, imitated the example of the Jewish people, it follows, of necessity, that the Jews could not have worshipped the founders of the world, but must have confined themselves to the service of the one Supreme God. But it is impossible to believe that Carpocrates could have thought thus honourably of the Jews and their religion. For, not to notice other things, we have in Clement of Alexandria a

C E N T. after having excited in the souls that had long
 II. been languishing under the dominion of super-
 stition

The Carpo-
 cratian theo-
 logy.

very striking passage cited from Epiphanes, the son of Carpocrates, in which he derides the Jewish law, and openly contends that the best part of it is nonsensical and childish. *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 514. Either Irenæus, therefore, must have here been guilty of an error, or the Latin translator must have much misrepresented his meaning. (III.) Irenæus points out the reward which, according to the Carpocratians, the Deity conferred on the soul of Jesus on account of the contempt thus shewn by him for the founders of the world: viz. *Virtutes per quas evacuavit quæ fuerunt in pænis passionibus quæ inerant hominibus.* The last three words are unintelligible, and may therefore be considered as having been somehow or other corrupted: but the meaning intended to be conveyed by the others is clear enough; namely that the Deity communicated to the soul of Jesus certain virtues or powers by means whereof it might *evacuate*, that is triumph over, the pains and afflictions to which his body was exposed. Carpocrates, therefore, believed that Jesus in reality underwent torments and death, but that in consequence of the virtues divinely communicated to him he was insensible of their severity and power. As to the particular way in which he conceived this to have been brought about, whether, for instance, he imagined Jesus to have been deprived by the Deity of all sensation, or whether he conceived the Deity to have inspired Jesus with a fortitude and elevation of mind superior to every evil that could be inflicted on him, we are not competent to speak. We should evidently do wrong however were we to confound these virtues by which Jesus was enabled to triumph over the pains of the cross, with that one great *virtue* which resided in him during the time that he lived at liberty and wrought his miracles amongst the Jews. The latter he was understood to have possessed previously to his being seized on and crucified, with the former he was not supposed to have been endowed until in the very act of contending with torments and death. These things considered, we may conclude Carpocrates to have taught that that great virtue, which had its residence in Jesus during the time of his teaching and working miracles amongst the Jews, departed out of him when he was about to suffer: but that the Deity did not leave him comfortless, but supplied him with such other succours from
 above

flition a wish to know and worship the Supreme Deity, might point out to them the way in which this knowledge of the True God would enable them to triumph over the wiles of the devil as well as the power of the founders of this world, and qualify them for re-ascending, on the dissolution of the body, to their original stations in the realms of light.

C E N T.
II.

LI. All ancient writers concur in representing the moral discipline of Carpocrates as in the highest degree vile and pernicious, and the lives led by his followers as having consequently been gross, libidinous, and filthy in the extreme. Nor can we altogether withhold our credit from this: for it is certain that he countenanced a community of women, and inculcated several other things which had a manifest tendency to encourage men in various wicked and flagitious practices. There are not wanting, however, circumstances which incline us to believe that the inferences deduced from his tenets have not been in every instance correct, and that the turpitude of certain of his maxims was tempered and corrected by doctrine of a very different character and tendency contained in others [e]. Nor can I easily bring myself to believe

The moral discipline of Carpocrates.

above as effectually prevented his soul from sinking under the weight of those manifold and grievous injuries and sufferings to which his corporeal frame was exposed.

[e] Nothing can possibly be conceived more infamous and gross than the moral doctrine of Carpocrates was, if any faith is to be placed in the accounts given us of it by all ancient writers. According to them he maintained; (I.) That there is nothing naturally evil in itself, but that all distinction between good and bad actions exists merely in human opinion and laws; and, consequently, that every one, in a moral point of view, is perfectly at liberty to do as he may like. (II.) That women, and every thing else

C E N T. believe what is handed down to us respecting
 II. a place

The moral
 discipline of
 Carpocrates.

else belonging to this world, ought to be common, for that it was the will of God that all men should possess an equal right in every thing. (III.) That the road to everlasting felicity lay open to those souls alone who devoted themselves to the perpetration of every vile and flagitious action, which it was possible for the heart of man to conceive. I pass over certain things less heinous and disgusting, inasmuch as every thing that can be deemed impious and detestable is certainly comprehended in the above. Conformably to these principles it is said to have been customary for the Carpocratians, in their nocturnal assemblies, to extinguish the light and engage in a promiscuous libidinous intercourse. Clem. Alex. *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 514. Of the above, that which I have noticed in the third place, I conceive to be a mere calumny, which had its origin probably in some tenet or other not sufficiently understood. For can any one possibly believe that a man who regarded the Deity as just, good, and beneficent, who conceived men's souls to be the offspring of this Deity, and who entertained a reverence for Christ; can any one, I say, for a moment persuade himself that a man of this description (and that Carpocrates was such an one is evident from the passages cited by Clement of Alexandria out of the writings of his son Epiphanes,) should have maintained that none but souls contaminated by every species of iniquity, and as it were glutted with sensual indulgence, would ever find their way back to the Deity, the fountain of all good? Equally void of any solid foundation do I consider what is told us respecting the nocturnal orgies of his disciples. For this opinion I shall presently assign certain reasons that I rather think the reader will consider as carrying with them some weight. As to the first and second of the tenets above noticed, they are avowed without reserve by Epiphanes, the son and most strenuous defender of Carpocrates and his opinions, from whose book *de Justitia Dei*, Clement of Alexandria (*Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 512. & seq.) gives us some long quotations, in which it is endeavoured, by various arguments, to prove that many things are by human laws pronounced to be evil which in point of fact have nothing whatever of evil or iniquity belonging to them. The Deity, it is boldly affirmed by this writer, designed every good thing which he bestowed on mortals, to be used and enjoyed by them in common. Mankind, by their laws, however, have destroyed this communion of use, and introduced a separate property in things.

Human

a place amongst the gods having been assigned to

C E N T.
II.

Human laws, therefore, he maintains, are repugnant to the divine will. These maxims are evidently inculcated by him with a reference to matrimony, and what are termed men's goods: for he says expressly, that women, according to the divine law, ought to be common, and that the same principle applies to fruits, corn, and animals: and that it is merely of human ordination that those who assert their right to the enjoyment of these things in common are termed adulterers and thieves. This passage is followed by another even worse. For he pronounces the law "Thou shalt not covet," to be absolutely ridiculous, inasmuch as the desires and appetites of the soul were implanted in it by the Deity; and still more ridiculous, he says, is the addition of the Jewish legislator, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods;" for it was impossible that the Deity, who implanted desires in the soul, could have commanded that these desires should be subdued and extinguished. But the most ridiculous thing of all he pronounces to be that injunction of the same legislator, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife;" for there can be no doubt but that the Deity designed all women to be common. These things certainly admit of no palliation whatever; and it should therefore seem to be established beyond a question by the words of Carpocrates himself, or at least those of his son, that nothing whatever was considered by him as unlawful, but that theft, fornication, adultery, &c. although prohibited by human laws, were, in his opinion, consentaneous to the divine will. Which opinion is even still more impious than that which is attributed to him by the early Christian writers: *viz.* "That all actions are in their nature indifferent, and that it is by human laws alone that certain of them are pronounced to be evil." For whoever maintains that the lusts and appetites by which mankind are disturbed, were implanted in their minds by the Deity himself, and that the actions to which men are prompted by such lusts and appetites, are consentaneous to the divine will, must of necessity hold that theft, fornication, robbery, adultery, &c. are to be regarded as good works. Hence then we may perceive that it was not altogether, without grounds or reason that some were led to assert that Carpocrates believed heaven to be accessible to such souls only as had in this life devoted themselves to the perpetration of every species of crime and iniquity. My belief, however, is that the man did not propound the above principles to his disciples

The moral
discipline of
Carpocrates.

C E N T. to his son Epiphanes by the inhabitants of the city

II.

The moral
discipline of
Carpocrates.

ciples at large, but only to certain select and confidential ones. A teacher who like Carpocrates maintained that our blessed Saviour's doctrine was of a two-fold description, the one popular, the other secret, would naturally have recourse to a similar method of instruction, and address himself to the multitude after a different manner from that which he adopted with regard to his friends and intimates. The atrocity and impiety of his opinions and doctrine, however, are in no degree extenuated by this. Notwithstanding all these things, however, I cannot help confessing myself strongly inclined to believe that the wickedness and depravity of Carpocrates could never have been so preposterously absurd and loathsome as is commonly imagined, but that, to the tenets above noticed, which are undoubtedly of the most vile and abominable nature, there must have been subjoined others, calculated, in a certain degree, to correct their turpitude and counteract their poison. Every one acquainted with human affairs must well know that if certain parts of various systems of discipline were to be separated from the rest, and considered by themselves, they would assume, not only an absurd, but an altogether impious and execrable character; but let them only be restored to their proper situation, and again connected with those things from which they were disjoined, and most of their deformity will at once disappear. Ancient writers bring us acquainted with but a very small portion of the Carpocratian philosophy and religion, and even this is exhibited by them in a very loose and disorderly manner. Could we obtain a view of the entire body, with all its various joints and sinews, it is very possible that the things which now produce affright, and fill us with a certain degree of horror, might, I will not say put on an unexceptionable and attractive appearance, for that certainly is not within the reach of possibility, but assume somewhat of a less hideous and disgusting aspect. In truth, it exceeds my powers of comprehension to understand how a man who, to pass over other things, believed the Deity to be, in every sense, perfection itself, who referred the seeds of all iniquity to matter, who considered immortal souls during their residence in the body to be confined, as it were, within a prison, who maintained that the Deity was anxious for the deliverance and salvation of these souls, and that Christ had pointed out to them the way of extricating themselves from the darkness of matter; how such a man, I say, could look upon

city of Sama, in the island of Cephalonia [f].

C E N T.
II.
Like

The moral
discipline of
Carpocrates.

upon *virtue* as merely an empty sound, and believe that every one was at liberty to follow the dictates of his lusts and appetites. Still more incomprehensible does this become to me when I perceive, what is apparent, even from the passages cited out of the writings of his son, that the man thus held up to us as such a monster of iniquity, was in full possession of his reason. Then, we have the testimony of Irenæus expressly stating Carpocrates to have taught that men were to be saved through faith and charity, διὰ πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης σώζεσθαι. Now a man who entertains this opinion, let him expound it in what manner he may, must certainly condemn any injuries done to others, and require that his followers should cultivate some sort of acquaintance with both justice and virtue, which is in direct opposition to the dogma generally attributed to Carpocrates, "that no actions are naturally evil in themselves, and that the distinction between good and bad actions exists merely in human laws and opinions." For if future felicity is to be acquired by the exercise of love and good offices towards others, it necessarily follows that there must be some divine law in existence commanding us to abstain from every thing that may injure our fellow creatures, and to do those things which may contribute to their welfare. Lastly, it strikes me as particularly deserving of remark, that the same Irenæus who exhibits the Carpocratians in such an unfavourable point of view as to other things, stands forward as their patron and defender against those who reproached them with the commission of crimes and offences of the deepest dye; and says that he could by no means give credit to the rumours that were prevalent of their iniquities; καὶ εἰ μὲν πράσσεται καὶ αὐτοῖς τὰ ἄδεια καὶ ἔκδημα, καὶ ἀπειρημένα, ἐγὼ ἂν ἴν πιστώσαιμι. *Et si quidem fiant hæc apud eos quæ sunt irreligiosa, et injusta, et vetita, ego nequam credam.* Surely this may be accounted testimony of no small weight, coming as it does from one who was in other respects their most hostile adversary. Possibly the doctrine of Carpocrates might be this,—that the distinction between good and bad actions had no existence but in human laws, but at the same time that in the present corrupt and perverse state of things such laws were proper and necessary.

[f] Clement of Alexandria, (*Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 511.)

C E N T.

II.

The moral
discipline of
Carpocrates.

Like the rest of the Gnostics, he asserted that his tenets and doctrine were founded on the secret discipline communicated by Christ to a few only of his followers. Hence it is clear that he could

relates that Epiphanes, the son of Carpocrates of Alexandria, by a Cephalonian woman, a young man of vast attainments and promise, but who died at the age of seventeen, had a place assigned him amongst the gods by the inhabitants of the city of Sama in the island of Cephalonian, and that divine honours were annually paid to him in that city, where were to be seen a magnificent temple, altar, &c. erected to his memory. The same account, somewhat amplified, is to be met with in Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xxxii. p. 210. & 211. But it should seem that this narrative is altogether of one and the same cast, and equally undeserving of credit, with that of Justin Martyr respecting the apotheosis of Simon Magus, and the statue erected to his memory by the Romans. For who can believe that the people of Sama, who were polytheists, and addicted to the superstitions of the Greeks, could have acted such a strangely inconsistent part as to assign a place amongst their gods, and annually pay divine honours to a young man who was a Christian, or at least a worshipper of Christ, and who held in detestation the gods of the Gentiles, whom, in common with his father, he believed to be a set of proud, malignant angels, the authors of this world, and the present calamitous state of things in it? Then again, why confer these honours on Epiphanes, any more than on his father? — or his mother who was a Cephalonian, a woman of the country? In fact, I suspect that, as in the case of Simon, so likewise in this of Epiphanes, an affinity between words and names has, owing to a want of caution in the first Christians, given rise to a most egregious error. Those who are conversant with the Greek language well know that the word Ἐπιφανίων was a term very frequently made use of in the Grecian rites; and that it was common for the Greek writers to denominate the appearance of any particular deity ἐπιφανεία. The festivals instituted in commemoration of such divine manifestations or appearances were also termed ἐπιφανεία. It strikes me therefore as highly probable, that it might have been customary for the people of Sama to refer to some festival or other of this kind under the title of ἐπιφανεία, and that certain

could have attached but little weight or authority to the sacred writings. He did not however reject them entirely, but seems in particular to have approved of the gospel according to St. Matthew [g].

C E N T.

II.

The moral discipline of Carpoocrates.

LII. In

certain Christians of Egypt accidentally sojourning in that city, but entirely unacquainted with the customs, religion, and names of the Greeks, being caught by the sound of the word, and recollecting that Epiphanes, the son of Carpoocrates of Alexandria, had a Cephalonian woman for his mother, hastily ran away with the idea that this Ἐπιφάνια was a festival instituted by the people of Sama in honour of that Epiphanes. On their return to Alexandria it was natural for them to recount what they had thus witnessed, and, as they thought, well understood: and hence, I take it, arose the fable of the apotheosis of Epiphanes, and the expensive honours that were annually paid to his memory by the people of Sama.

(g) Irenæus tells us that the Carpocratians in their writings (συγγραμμῶν) stated that their tenets and doctrine were communicated by Jesus in a secret mysterious manner to his apostles, with an injunction that they should make these things known only to certain select and confidential persons. Most of the Gnostics were accustomed to shelter themselves behind a tale of this sort by way of getting rid of any thing that might be urged against them out of the Looks of the New Testament. The apostolic writings, they asserted, contained merely the ordinary religion of Christ, or that which was suited to the capacities of the multitude, a thing totally different from the sublime and recondite Christian discipline. Eventually, however, the very means which they thus took to forward their own cause, and depreciate the authority of the sacred writings, were productive of consequences directly the reverse. For by admitting, as they did, that the books of the New Testament were the writings of Christ's apostles, and at the same time denying that their own tenets were derived from this source, they in fact supplied their adversaries with two very powerful arguments in support of the genuine Christian faith. Since Carpoocrates then pretended to have derived his system of discipline from the secret communications of Christ to his apostles, we may naturally conclude that he held

C E N T.

II.

The system
of Valen-
tine.

LII. In fecundity of genius however, extent of travels, reputation, number of disciples, and various other respects, the heretics whom we have just been commemorating were left at an infinite distance behind by Valentine, who like them was born in Egypt, but having at the commencement of this century originated a new system of discipline, and met with no little success in the propagation of it amongst his countrymen, was induced to transfer his abode to Rome (*b*). In this city and its neighbourhood he

held the books of the New Testament very cheap, and considered them as calculated merely for the multitude. As Irenæus, however, states him in support of his opinion respecting the transmigration of souls, to have adduced the words of St. Matthew, chap. v. ver. 25, 26. there seems to be reason for believing that he approved of the writings of that evangelist.

[*b*] Of all the Gnostic sects, not one, with the exception of the Manichees, has more engaged the attention of ancient writers in describing its tenets and discipline than that of the Valentinians. Not to notice the more recent writers of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries, such as Epiphanius, Theodoret, Augustin, and others, who have either regularly or incidentally been led to treat of this sect and its tenets, we find, on recurring to the writers of the second century, the æra of its origination, Irenæus devoting the first seven chapters of his work *Adversus Hæreses*, to a comprehensive review of its discipline, Tertullian not only attacking its principles in a particular treatise, but also inveighing warmly against them in his book *de Præscript. adv. Hæret.* as well as in various other parts of his writings, and Clement of Alexandria very frequently adverting to them in his *Stromata*, for the purpose of exposing their fallacy, and bringing them into discredit. Notwithstanding this however, it would be easy to point out many things in the Valentinian system of discipline, which are but partially intelligible, and in regard to which we cannot but wish for further information. The most natural conclusion is, that as to some particulars, the knowledge which these writers themselves had acquired was but very imperfect,

he prevailed on such a number of Christians to embrace his corrupt opinions, that the church became alarmed, and, after having been twice excommunicated without effect, he was at length absolutely and finally expelled from her bosom as a desperate and incorrigible heretic. For

C E N T.
II.

The system
of Valen-
tine.

perfect, although as to others our ignorance no doubt may arise from their not having expressed themselves with a sufficient degree of perspicuity and precision. There can be no doubt but that the Valentian sect was of more recent origin than those of which we have already given an account, for it is pretty plainly to be collected from the testimony of ancient authors, that it had no regular existence until after Valentine had quitted Italy and taken up his residence in the island of Cyprus; which unquestionably did not take place until about the middle of this century. Previously to this, Valentine, although he differed in opinion materially from other Christians, and met with no little success in the propagation of his errors, yet maintained communion with the church, and was willing to pass for one of its members. That form of religion, however, which he considered as the true and genuine one, must have suggested itself to him at a much earlier period, inasmuch as he had taught it in Egypt and at Rome many years prior to his excommunication and expulsion from the church. According to Clement of Alexandria, *Stromat.* lib. vii. p. 898. he was supposed to have been a pupil of Theodas the disciple of St. Paul. If this be true, he must have lived in the first century, and attained to a great age. The interpretation given to the words of Clement as to this, by almost every writer who has adverted to them is, that Valentine made it a matter of boast that his discipline was founded on principles privately imparted by St. Paul. Nor does it appear to me at all unlikely, that this might be what Clement intended to convey. For it was the custom of the Gnostics, who could not but admit that their opinions were at variance with the sacred writings, to shelter themselves behind certain secret communications from Christ and his apostles. I think it but right however to observe, that we have no express statement in Clement to the above effect. All that he says is simply this, that there were persons who represented Valentine as having been a disciple of Theodas. As to the authors of this rumour he is silent.

faking

C E N T.

II.

The system
of Valen-
tine.

faking Italy therefore, he withdrew to the island of Cyprus, where, laying aside all dissimulation, he became the parent of a sect, which in point of form and external observances differed in no material degree from other Christian assemblies; but in opinions and tenets retained scarcely any resemblance to them whatever. From this spot the sect soon widely diffused itself throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe. Valentine, it should seem probable, ended his days in Cyprus, somewhat about the middle of this century. It is reported that the idea of instituting a new sect first suggested itself to him in consequence of his having been disappointed in the attainment of the bishopric of I know not what city, and that his conduct ought rather to be ascribed to ambition than to error: but the history of his fortunes seems to give a complete contradiction to this [i].

LIII. The

(i) Tertullian in his discourse *contra Valentin*, cap. iv. informs us that Valentine aspired to a bishopric, a station for which his genius and eloquence appeared eminently to qualify him, but that the preference was given to a martyr, or more rightly a confessor: and, that filled with indignation at this, he became an opponent of the genuine religion, and set about establishing a new sect. Now as to the first part of this statement, namely, that Valentine was disappointed in the hope of being promoted to a bishopric, there is nothing in it at all difficult of belief: but the latter part of it must undoubtedly be false, if what Tertullian himself and other ancient writers report respecting the fortunes of this man be true. For Tertullian in his book *de Prescriptione Hereticorum*, cap. xxx. p. 242. expressly represents him as for a long time practising dissimulation, and studiously glossing over his erroneous doctrines, not only during his residence in Egypt, but also afterwards at Rome. Which plainly proves that nothing could be farther from his intention than that of establishing an heretical sect. The same writer says, that led away by too great a desire after knowledge, and an unbounded curiosity, he, by degrees for-

LIII. The leading principles of the Valentinian system of discipline corresponded with those

C E N T.

II.

The Valentinian /Eons.

forsook the high road of truth, and laboured in disseminating his erroneous principles amongst the Christians at Rome. On this account he was twice subjected to a temporary excommunication, and as often received again into the bosom of the church, but it being found that no faith whatever was to be placed in his promises, for that he constantly recurred to his old habits, and the propagation of his heretical opinions, he was at length excluded, without hope of return, from every sort of association or intercourse with the faithful. From all this, it is manifest, that he felt an unwillingness to be divorced from the church, and consequently could have entertained no thoughts of establishing a separate sect. For surely, a man, who on two occasions exerted himself to the utmost to obtain re-admission into the church, after having been excommunicated, and with a view thereto twice entered into an engagement to amend his opinions and conduct, could have felt no disposition whatever to become the parent of a sect, but must have been anxious to retain his connexion with the faithful. When at length however, his utter expulsion from the church was irrevocably sealed by a public decree, we find him withdrawing to the island of Cyprus, and there laying the foundation of a particular sect. It was not therefore the disappointment of his hopes with regard to a bishopric, but the severity of the Roman church, that made Valentine a sectary, and led him to secede with his disciples from the regular Christian Fold. I rather suspect then, that Tertullian must have blended together two things entirely unconnected with each other, and confounded the cause of Valentine's journey to Rome, with the cause of his separation from the church. The true history of the matter, in all probability, is this:— Valentine had been led to cherish the expectation of succeeding to the bishopric of some church in his native country, Egypt. It was an ancient and established rule, however, amongst the Christians, that whenever any persons coming within the description of confessors, were to be met with amongst the members of a church, they should on a vacancy be promoted to the bishoprick of such church, in preference to all other, yea, even more learned candidates. A confessor, then, probably, presented himself in the church to the presidency over which Valentine had aspired, and the hopes

C E N T. those of the various other Gnostic sects [k]; nor
 II. did its founder attempt to disguise this, but was
 well

The Valen-
 tinian Eons.

hopes and expectations of the latter, consequently terminated in grievous disappointment. Filled with vexation and disgust at his want of success, he bade adieu to his native country, and travelled to Rome. During his abode in the capital of Italy, so far was he from meditating the formation of a sect, or any thing detrimental to the church, that he rather studied, by means of his eloquence and reputation for learning, to open a way for himself to its offices and honours. Finding himself, however, here again deceived in his expectations, and the Roman church, having in consequence of his pertinacity in error, expelled him from her bosom, without hope of return, he withdrew into the island of Cyprus, and there became the parent and patron of the sect which goes under his name.

(k) From what source the Valentinian religion and philosophy were derived, has been made the theme of much ingenious disputation by the learned of modern days, since the time that Jo. Franc. Boddus, in his dissertation *de Hæresi Valentiniana* annexed to his *Introductio ad Historiam Philosophiæ Hebræorum*, pronounced both the one and the other to have originated in the *Cabbala*, or philosophy of the Hebrews. Ancient authors, for the most part, conceived the Valentinian system to have been a child of the Platonic school: but if we abstract from it a few things, which certainly bear an affinity to some of the Platonic tenets, the remainder will be found to differ so essentially from the philosophy of the ancient academy, that without violence no sort of reconciliation can be produced between them. Much less are those to be attended to, who represent Valentine as having endeavoured to imitate and improve upon the *theogonies* and *cosmogonies* of Hesiod and other ancient Grecian, Phœnician, and Egyptian poets. That there is a vast difference between those ancient *theogonies* and the Valentinian philosophy respecting the Deity and this world, must readily be perceived by any one who will be at the pains of comparing them together. With regard to its having been derived from the *Cabbala*, it must certainly be admitted that in the system of Valentine, there are some things bearing no very distant resemblance to the maxims delivered down by the ancient Jewish masters: but at the same time there are in it other things

well contented that himself and his followers should be styled Gnostics. Being endowed by nature, however, with a genius most surprisngly prolific, he boldly ventured forth beyond the limits within which the rest of this tribe had deemed it expedient to confine themselves, and dilating on such topics as had been previously noticed by them merely in a general way, distributed them into parts, and, with the assistance of an inexhaustible imagination, endeavoured to fill up the intervals in such a way as effectually to meet the numerous difficulties with which he

C E N T.
II.
The Valentinian Æons.

things in abundance, of a diametrically opposite character. Besides, it is my belief, that for the rudiments of that discipline which the doctors of the *Cabbala* profess, the Jews were indebted to the oriental philosophers. Those who coincide with the English prelate G. Hooper, in referring the Valentinian fictions to an Egyptian origin, find themselves equally embarrassed with the rest, when they come to enter into particulars. In my opinion the class to which Valentine ought to be referred is not so involved in obscurity, but that it may be pointed out without any very great difficulty. By all the ancient writers he is reckoned amongst the Gnostics: and his system possesses all those features, by which the Gnostic discipline is peculiarly characterized, such as a *Pleroma*, *Bythus*, *Æons*, *Sophia*, *Demiurgus*, and the like. Without doubt then the first elements of the system which he originated were drawn from the oriental philosophy. To these he added not a few conceits of his own, and after a new mode digested, expounded, amplified, and brought into connection various things which had been treated of by others, merely in a confused, obscure, brief, and desultory manner. This could not have proved any difficult task, to one whom all writers concur in representing as a man of the most fertile imagination and unbounded fancy. In what respects however, Valentine was beholden altogether to the Gnostic discipline, or for what particulars he was indebted principally to his own invention, the Gnostic tenets furnishing him merely with a general outline, it is impossible for any one, at this day, to determine with any thing like precision.

knew

C E N T. knew they were beset [1]. First, in the Ple-
 II. roma, or that immense space refulgent with un-
 The Valen- clouded
 tinian Æons.

[1] The difference between Valentine and the various other leaders of Gnostic sects, will be found to consist chiefly in what I am now about to point out. Most of the latter appear to have been in the habit of philosophizing long previous to their embracing Christianity. Their endeavours, therefore, were directed to make the Christian religion accommodate itself to the philosophic system of which they approved. With Valentine, on the contrary, a profession of the Christian faith seems to have preceded the study of philosophy; the consequence of which was, that in his system philosophy was made wholly subservient to Christianity, and certain parts of the former, which appeared not easily to admit of a reconciliation with the principles of the latter, were altogether thrown into the shade. The greater part of the words which he makes use of in unfolding his opinions are taken from the books of the New Testament. This circumstance, according to my judgment, plainly declares, that these books, together with the Christian religion, must have been received and approved of by him before he set about constituting a regular discipline of his own. Certainly many of his æons would not have had Christian names given to them, but others of a very different character, had Valentine, previously to his embracing Christianity, been in the habit of philosophizing in the same way as the rest of the Gnostics did respecting the Deity and the origin of all things. Another argument as to this point is, I think, to be drawn from the reasons (in themselves truly ridiculous most assuredly, and proving to demonstration the man's extravagance and folly, but nevertheless deduced from the books of the New Testament) which he adduces in support of various parts of his discipline. Being questioned, for instance, as to how he came to know that there were exactly thirty æons neither more nor less, he answers that he drew his conclusion as to this from the thirty years of Christ's life which were suffered to elapse previously to his entering on his ministry. *Irenæus contra Hæres.* lib. i. c. 1. § 3. p. 7. In the adoption of this number he, with great but very childish subtlety, attempts still further to justify himself from our blessed Saviour's parable respecting the labourers sent by the householder into the vineyard. Matthew xx. First, he contends that by the hours at which the labourers were hired we ought to understand æons; and

clouded light, which the Gnostics considered as the immediate habitation of the Deity, he placed thirty Æons, or natures of the highest dignity, of whom the one half were males, the other females. These again he divided into three orders of different degrees of excellence and

C E N T.
II.
The Valen-
tinian Æons.

then reckoning up those hours, he, with the utmost confidence, asserts that nothing whatever can be clearer than that the number of the æons must be thirty; for if one, and three, and six, and nine, and eleven, be added together, they will be found to yield a total of thirty. What can be more obvious? His duodecad he defends on the ground that Christ, when he was twelve years of age, disputed with the Jewish doctors in the temple, and that twelve was the number of our Lord's apostles. Irenæus, l. i. c. 3. p. 14. Many arguments of a similar description might, with a very moderate degree of labour, be collected from Irenæus and other writers. Now all these things, unless I am much mistaken, obviously indicate a man desirous of adjusting and determining various philosophical precepts which he had accidentally picked up, by the test of scripture, not one labouring to make the principles of Christianity conform to certain rules and maxims of philosophy in which he had been previously grounded. I am induced therefore to believe that Valentine, after embracing the Christian faith, in all its genuine simplicity, accidentally fell in with some man or other addicted to the Gnostic philosophy, and that, being captivated with its nonsensical theories, he conceived the resolution of comparing them with the sacred writings, expecting that, with the assistance of scripture, he might be able to expound them in a way more accurate and consensaneous to religion than had hitherto been pursued by the Gnostics. The result of this undertaking was, that he became the author of a new kind of philosophical religion, differing, not so much in words and terms, as in the disposition and connection of the things themselves, from others that had preceded it. The terms *Pleroma* and *Æons*, for instance, were obviously derived from his instructor in the Gnostic way of philosophising; but in expounding the nature of the former, and determining the number of the latter, he, after consulting the sacred writings, struck out into a path entirely his own.

CENT.
II.

The Valen-
tinian Æons.

power : an *Ogdoad*, a *Decad*, and a *Duodecad*. The *Ogdoad*, which possessed in many respects a superiority over the rest, and contained within it the causes and reasons of all things, he represented as made up of two *Tetrads*. The first of these *Tetrads* he stated to consist of the Deity himself, whom he termed *Bythus* and *Propator*, and his spouse *Ennoia* (Thought), who was also occasionally styled *Sigè* (Silence), together with their immediate offspring, *Nus* (Mind), and *Aletheia* (Truth). The second, which was somewhat inferior in point of dignity to the first, he represented as being composed of *Logos* (the Word), and *Zoë* (Life), *Anthropos* (Man), and *Ecclesia* (the Church). Of these latter four, he conceived the first two to have been generated of *Nus* and *Aletheia*, and in process of time to have become the parents of the second pair. The *Decad*, which followed next in succession to the *Ogdoad*, he considered as owing its existence, in the first instance, to *Logos* and *Zoë*. From these sprung *Bythus* and *Mixis*, who in their turn begat *Ageratos* and *Henosis*, from the union of whom again were produced *Autophyes* and *Hedone*, of whom were generated *Acinetos* and *Syncrasis*, whose offspring, *Monogenes* and *Macaria*, terminate the *Decad*. For in these Æons the generative power was supposed gradually to diminish until it became quite extinct. From *Anthropos* and *Ecclesia*, the other branch of the second *Tetrad*, sprung that order or class of the celestial family to which the title of *Duodecad* was given, in consequence of its being composed of twelve Æons, the one half males, the other females. The first two of these were *Paracletos* and *Pistis*, of whose offspring, *Patricos* and *Elpis*, were generated *Metricos* and *Agape*. By the

union of these latter again were produced *Ainos* and *Synesis*, of whom were begotten *Ecclesiasticos* and *Macariotes*, with whose offspring, *Theletos* and *Sophia*, who proved unfruitful, the Duodecad terminates. To these thirty Æons were added four others of a singular and extraordinary nature, to whom no female associates were assigned. Of these the first, who was styled *Horus*, being placed by his parents *Bythus* and *Sigè*, at the extreme limits of the *Pleroma*, kept a continual guard over its boundaries, and restrained the inferior æons, lest possibly being stimulated by an ambitious curiosity they might be tempted to overleap their proper barrier, and be swallowed up in that immense ocean by which the *Pleroma* was supposed to be surrounded. Next after *Horus* came *Christos* (Christ), and *Pneuma agion* (the Holy Spirit), two unassociated æons, whom *Bythus*, the father of all, through the channel of *Monogenes*, called into existence for the purpose of instructing and confining within the line of duty such other æons as might be found wavering, or in any degree disposed to deviate therefrom. The last of this numerous spiritual family was *Jesus*, a most noble æon, produced by the united act of all the other æons, endowed by them with every gift and faculty of the most exalted kind, and constantly encompassed with a mighty host of angels as a guard. In this long and tiresome fable, it is scarcely possible to believe that there can be any thing contained at all favouring either of wit, wisdom, or ingenuity: and all the pains which have hitherto been bestowed in endeavouring to reconcile these intricate reveries of a disordered brain with reason and truth, can only be regarded in

C E N T.
II.
The Valentinian Æons.

C E N T. the light of so much labour entirely thrown
 II. away [m].

The Valen-
 tinian Eons.

LIV. These

[m] Amongst men distinguished for their learning there have not been wanting some who, possessing the rational faculty in an eminent degree themselves, are unwilling to believe that Valentine could have been wholly destitute of it, and have therefore endeavoured to hit upon some means or other for interpreting his principles and tenets in such a way as might at least give them the appearance of being partly founded in truth. The strange and unaccustomed kind of language, they say, to which he had recourse, threw such a veil of obscurity over his tenets and doctrine, as the ancient fathers found themselves utterly unable to penetrate: but only let this veil be removed by a skilful and sagacious hand, and the things themselves, rather than the representations of those things, be brought under review, and there will appear to be much less disagreement between the Valentinian tenets and opinions and those of the Christians in general, than has been commonly imagined. Vid. Camp. Vitring. *Observat. Sacr.* l. i. c. 2. p. 138, & seq. *Souverain Platonisme dévoilé*, cap. viii. p. 68. Isaac de Beaufobre, *Histoire de Manichéé*, v. i. p. 548. 551. 582. 588 & seq. Ja. Bafnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, tom. iii. p. 729. and amongst the first, Pet. Faydit *Eclaircissemens sur l'Histoire Ecclef. des deux premieres Siecles*, p. 12. & *Alteration du Dogme Theologique par la Philosophie d'Aristote*, p. 186. 365, & seq. where he intimates himself to have in contemplation *An Apology for Valentine*. The reader will understand me as by no means wishing to discommend such attempts, which seem to speak highly in favour of the sagacity, equity, and prudence of their authors; neither does the circumstance of their having been made, occasion in me any great surprize. For it cannot be denied but that here and there certain sparks of the truth appear to gleam forth from amidst the Valentinian dross; and we are certain that the early Christian fathers, in numberless instances, were not sufficiently on their guard against mistaking and misrepresenting the tenets which they undertook to combat. It seems to me, however, that I am fully warranted in going the length of saying this much, that if Valentine himself could arise out of his grave he would reject the good offices of these his ingenious and erudite defenders. For we have his own confession, that the discipline which he taught was altogether at variance with the religion pro-
 fessed

LIV. These Æons, although of divine origin, were

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian theology.

fessed by the greater part of the Christians of his day. He also denied that his principles and tenets were to be supported from the holy Scriptures as they were then read, and as they are read by us at present, and boasted that they were in great measure founded on the secret communications of Christ and his apostles, and certain writings of St. Matthias. From all these things then it is manifest, that it must be acting in direct opposition to what would be his wishes, were he alive, for any one to maintain that the only difference between his tenets and those of his opponents consists merely in words and the manner in which they have been handed down to us. Besides, amongst those advocates for Valentine, there is not to be found one who will pretend to deny that in his system of discipline not a few things present themselves which are altogether inexplicable, and some so utterly stupid and absurd, as to afford no ground whatever for excuse. A circumstance, which, unless I am much mistaken, is of itself sufficient to prove what a waste of time and pains it is for persons to employ themselves in endeavouring to purge such a system of its dross, and give it a new complexion. For we find it confessed that the ænigmatical parts present an insurmountable obstacle to our arriving at any certain conclusion with regard to such parts as are more intelligible; and surely the absurdities with which it abounds, inasmuch as they leave us in no doubt as to the man's extravagance and folly, must be allowed to place it beyond a question that Valentine could not have been such a character as to merit that any wise man should become either his defender or apologist. How, I would ask, can that be found or wholesome which is interwoven and incorporated with what is erroneous and absurd?—or that be consentaneous to reason which depends on principles and opinions that set all reason at defiance? By way of illustration, let us take, for example, the thirty Æons of the Valentinian system, and the mode in which they are connected with each other. Those of the learned who have undertaken to advocate the cause of Valentine suggest, with more or less confidence, that by these Æons we ought not to understand real persons existing separately from the Deity; for that all this hæresiarch had in view was to distinguish between certain notions and ideas, by assigning to them particular names, and clothing them with the form and character of persons.

C E N T. were yet supposed to be liable to the same passions

II.

The Valentinian theology.

persons. This celestial family of *Æons*, begotten of the Deity himself, is, they say, to be regarded in somewhat of a metaphysical light, as exhibiting the succession, series, and connection of the virtues and actions of the Supreme Being. For nothing can be more common than for those who would wish to speak perspicuously of things altogether abstracted from sense, to have recourse to a personification of their ideas. But this opinion, although it may for a moment carry with it a specious and imposing air, will, on examination, be found to have nothing either of weight or probability attached to it. For as Valentine was confessedly a Gnostic, and the *Æons* of all the other Gnostics were conceived to be not merely feigned or imaginary but real persons, it is most natural to conclude that the Valentinian *Æons* were regarded as beings of a like description. Again, if we proceed to apply this exposition to the Valentinian discipline, it may indeed be possible for us, though not without difficulty, to make it in some degree accord with the first four pair of *Æons*; but let us attempt to move one step farther on, and we are immediately encountered by resistance, all the *Æons* thenceforward, by the actions and affections which are attributed to them, tacitly declaring it to be utterly impossible that they could ever have been intended to represent notions or ideas of the Divine virtues and actions. (1.) These *Æons*, as we shall presently see, were supposed to have been filled with envy at the glory with which *Nus*, the most exalted of them was invested; a circumstance, as it strikes me, incontestibly proving that both he and they could have been considered in no other light than as real persons. For in what way a divine virtue or action could be filled with envy, or sicken at another's exaltation, is certainly not within the reach of any ordinary degree of comprehension. (2.) All these *Æons* were ambitious of mentally comprehending the magnitude of their first parent, the Supreme Deity. (3.) An attempt to gratify this inordinate ambition brought the last of them, who was inferior to the rest in point of virtue, into the greatest peril. (4.) Christ and the Holy Spirit were generated of the Deity for the purpose of repressing, in the other *Æons*, this most dangerous wish of attaining to a knowledge of the Divine Nature, and preventing them from yielding to its impulses. (5.) Edified and invigorated by these instructors,

the

fions and perturbations of mind as distract the

C E N T.
II.

the Æons, who had previously occupied themselves wholly in contemplating the majesty of the first great Parent, directed their attention to a different object, and by an union of their energies produced Jesus, with a host of angels for his guard, a nature constituted, as one may say, of the very marrow of all the Æons. (6.) This generation of Jesus exhausted, as it were, those powers with which they previously superabounded; for they are represented as afterwards keeping a due restraint on themselves, and not indulging in their former inordinate desire of attaining to a comprehension of the Deity. (7.) On the borders of the *Pleroma* was placed *Horus*, a most powerful Æon, whose province it was to take care lest any of his brethren, under the influence of some sudden impulse, might be tempted to overleap the boundaries of their celestial abode. Now all these things are obviously of such a nature as to preclude every possibility of their being attributed to any other than beings endowed with intellect and will, and existing by themselves really and truly, distinct, not only from the Deity, but from each other. Valentine must therefore either have been out of his senses, and not have known what he meant himself, or he must have believed his Æons to have been real persons, the offspring of the Deity, and have regarded the *Pleroma*, as he termed it, in the light of a kingdom divided into as many provinces as there were pairs of Æons, each having two rulers peculiar to itself, the one a male, the other a female. I can perceive it, however, to be very possible that the notion may suggest itself to some, and in fact I believe it has so suggested itself, that these Æons were similar to the *Ideas* which Plato is said to have feigned to himself, and which many of his disciples certainly did feign to themselves, namely, natures really existing in the Deity as living exemplars or images of mundane things. Without doubt Valentine, if respect be had to the names of merely some of his Æons, may appear to have had somewhat of this kind in contemplation; but, when examined throughout, the names of others will be found altogether irreconcilable with this supposition. Nor does it strike me that his cause would derive any considerable degree of support from this interpretation, even supposing it to be in every respect well founded; for what are those Platonic *Ideas* but persons?

The Valentinian theology.

C E N T.

II.

The Valentinian theology.

human race [n]. All of them, for instance, are represented as being filled with envy at the distinguished felicity enjoyed by *Nus* the chief son of the Deity, who alone was adequate to the full

[n] This imperfection in the *Æons*, or Divine Natures, will excite but little surprize if it be considered that the Deity himself was regarded by all descriptions of the Gnostics, and particularly by the Valentinians, in a very different light from that in which he was viewed by every other denomination of Christians, and that they did not allow even this first great Author of all things to be possessed of any thing beyond a limited degree of intelligence and power. Most assuredly the knowledge of the Deity could not, according to them, have been very extensive, since he was incapable of foreseeing what would be the fate of the *Æons* generated of himself, and took no means to provide for their safety and tranquillity until his eyes were opened by the vastly perilous attempt of the *Æon Sophia*. That they believed him to possess merely a circumscribed power is equally evident from his being represented as unable to prevent the occurrence of many things contrary to his will without the limits of the *Pleroma*, or to obstruct the institution of a new order of things to the origination of which he could not but have been inimical. The parturition of *Sophia*, we are told, was unquestionably highly displeasing to the Deity. The consequences of that parturition then, such as the formation of matter, the birth of *Demiurgus*, the fabrication of the world, and the like, could never have been acceptable in his sight. Whatever things were done therefore, without the limits of the *Pleroma*, appear to have been accomplished without his approbation, and may, consequently, be adduced as so many proofs of his infirmity or want of power. The Deity of the Gnostics was also destitute of various other qualities, which right reason as well as the sacred writings point out as belonging to the Supreme Being. If such, then, were the ideas entertained by the Valentinians and the whole tribe of the Gnostics respecting the first great Parent of all things, who can feel in any degree surprised that his offspring should have been regarded by those pretenders to superior wisdom as agitated by blind and unruly affections, and pining away under the influence of envy and an inordinate curiosity?

compre-

comprehension of his father's greatness, and all of them described as animated with the most ardent desire of attaining to a similar degree of knowledge, not one of them believing it beyond the reach of his capacity to arrive at a just conception of the transcendent majesty and excellence of the first great Parent. Inflamed beyond measure with this desire of fully comprehending the nature of the Supreme Deity, Sophia, or Wisdom, the youngest, and consequently the weakest of the Æons, became at length so agitated and perturbed, that, had she not been prevented by *Horus*, the guardian of the celestial boundaries, she would have overleaped the limits of the Pleroma, and plunged headlong into the vast ocean of matter that lay beyond it [o]. This violent commotion, however, was productive of an effect which it was utterly out of the power of *Horus* to prevent, namely, that Sophia was delivered of a daughter styled *Achamoth*, who, being expelled from the Pleroma, was immersed in the rude and chaotic mass of unformed matter which lay without it. With a view to prevent the other branches of his family from incurring any similar risk, Bythus, or the Supreme Being, by means of Nus, produced two new Æons, *Christ* and the *Holy Spirit*; of whom the former had it in command to instruct the celestial family that the immense greatness of the Deity

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian theology.

[o] In the Greek of Irenæus it is εἰς τὴν ὅλην ἔσιν, which is rendered by the old Latin translator *in universam substantiam*. But it is evident that this is the same as τὴν τῆ ὅλης ἔσιν, *universitatis rerum materiam*. Without side the Pleroma was situated, according to Valentine, the immense mass of matter. He did not, however, as we shall presently see, conceive it to be possessed of either motion, form, or a generative power.

could

C E N T.

II.

The Valen-
tinian theo-
logy.

could be comprehended only by *Nus*, or the First Begotten; whilst the latter was to exhort and persuade the *Æons* to subdue, as far as possible, every irregular commotion of mind, and to make it their object to celebrate and worship their first great Parent with a tranquil spirit. Calmed and enlightened by the admonitions of these instructors and guides, the *Æons* unanimously resolved to give a different direction to their energies, and, uniting together their powers, produced, with the approbation, and in honour of the Supreme Father, the being styled *Jesus*, the most illustrious Star of the *Pleroma*.

LV. Scarcely were the internal peace and tranquillity of the celestial commonwealth thus re-established, when commotions of the most violent kind began to take place without its limits; commotions which eventually occasioned the formation of this world, and the generation of the human race. *Achamoth*, the daughter of the *Æon Sophia*, upon being expelled from the *Pleroma*, lay at the first in a very miserable state, being utterly destitute of either form, figure, or light. Touched with her calamitous situation, *Christ*, who, as we have seen, was invested with the function of a governor and instructor of the *Æons* in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, imparted to her somewhat of form, intelligence, and rationality. Aroused and stimulated by the assistance thus given her, *Achamoth* made a nearer advance to the *Pleroma*, and endeavoured to obtain for herself a larger portion of light. In her attempts at this, however, she found herself sedulously opposed by *Horus*, the ever-watchful guardian of the borders of the *Pleroma*; a circumstance which threw her into the most violent perturbations, and over-

overwhelmed her, as it were, with apprehension and anxiety. At one time, giving way to despondency, she would be dissolved in tears; at another, recollecting the light of which she had obtained a glimpse, her countenance would be illumined with smiles. These different affections had a very wonderful influence on the barren and shapeless mass of matter with which she was surrounded, and eventually gave birth to the various elements of the universe. From the irresistible desire with which she was inflamed of obtaining further light, arose "*The Soul of the World*," "*The Soul of Demiurgus*," and the like; from her anxiety and sorrow, all other things. All liquid matter had its origin in her tears, all lucid matter in her smiles, all the elements of the world in her sorrows and despondency [*p*]. All the component parts of the

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian theology.

[*p*] Valentine should seem from this to have regarded Achamoth, or, as she was at other times styled, Enthymesis, as the parent of matter, which, in point of fact, was nothing more or less than referring the origin of matter to the Deity himself. For Achamoth, the parent of matter, was the daughter of Sophia; and this latter was derived of the Deity, being the last of the Æons. Valentine therefore did not assert the existence of two eternal principles, the Deity and Matter; but conceived all matter to have been, in point of fact, derived from the Deity, although with the intervention of divers generations. Such is the exposition that has been given of the tenets of Valentine on this head by several very eminent scholars; and it must be confessed that in doing so they appear to have some support from the testimony of ancient writers. I cannot, however, say that this, by any means, accords with the judgment which I myself have been led to form on the subject. The doctrine of Valentine, it is my belief, was, that matter had existed without the limits of the Pleroma for an infinite period prior to Achamoth's birth, but in a confused and unformed state, entirely destitute of motion, and every other

C E N T.

II.

The Valen-
tinian theo-
logy.

the world were therefore now supplied; but there was still wanting an architect who might reduce them into order, and knit them together in one grand whole. Addressing herself in supplication, therefore, to Christ, Achamoth obtained the favour of having Jesus, or the Saviour, sent to her, surrounded with his host of angels. With this assistance she produced three substances, the material, the animal, and the spiritual; on one of which, namely, the animal, she

other quality. For, as we have already observed just above from Irenæus, and could, if it were necessary, confirm, by the testimony of Tertullian and other ancient writers, Valentine placed without the limits of the Pleroma τὴν ὅλην, or τῆ ὅλης ὑπόστασιν, *substantiam universam*, or *universi*, “the universal substance,” or “the substance of the universe.” Now by this name no one surely will pretend to say that he could have meant empty space, for the very name itself entirely precludes such a supposition; and if he did not mean space, it appears to me impossible that he could have meant any thing else but *matter*. Whatever, therefore, is related by ancient authors respecting the offspring born of Achamoth without the limits of the Pleroma, ought to be understood as indicating merely those mutations or changes which her perturbations produced in matter which had previously lain in a state of absolute quiescence and destitute of every quality. Her tears did not generate the liquid matter, but merely occasioned a part of matter, which had previously existed in a solid state, to deliquesce and separate itself from the rest. Her smiles did not produce the pellucid matter, but merely caused a portion of matter, which had previously been opaque and absolutely impervious, to become luminous and transparent. Her sorrow did not call into existence air, water, fire, and earth, but merely caused such commotions in a part of matter, that all these elements were produced from it. In short, Enthymesis, or Achamoth, might be looked upon, with regard to a few things, as the author of certain modifications, and she might likewise be considered as having communicated divers qualities to matter in general; but she certainly, in my opinion, could never have been regarded by Valentine as the parent of matter itself.

bestowed

bestowed the gift of *Form*, a boon rejected by the other two; and hence sprung *Demiurgus* the Founder and Governor of all things [q].

C E N T.
II.

LVI. *Demiurgus* being thus generated of animal matter, undertook, without delay, the formation of the corporeal universe, a work in which he was privately assisted in part by *Jesús*, or the Saviour, and in part by his mother *Achamoth*. The course he pursued was, in the first place, to separate the animal matter from the material. Of the former, or the animal portion, he then formed certain celestial bodies, particularly seven heavens, by which, it is easy to perceive, were meant seven planets or wandering stars, which constituted places of residence for, and were governed by an equal number of the most powerful spirits or angels [r]. The supreme heaven *Demiurgus* reserved to himself, and assigned to his mother that space which separates the *Pleroma* from the world. The material portion, in consequence of its having originated from a threefold source, namely, the apprehension, the sorrow, and the anxiety of *Achamoth*, was of a threefold nature, and, under the plastic hand of *Demiurgus*, gave

The Valentinian tenets respecting the creation.

[q] This fable is recounted at much greater length by *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and other ancient writers. To me, however, it appeared unnecessary to lay before the reader any thing more than a sketch of its leading features; or, if I may so speak, I deemed it sufficient to exhibit a general view of the different acts without entering into the minutiae of each scene in detail.

[r] We may here discover evident traces of the non-sensical dreams of the Egyptians respecting seven animated planets, or moveable stars, possessing the governance and direction of the corporeal universe. The idea was adopted by most of the Gnostics, especially by such as had received their education in Egypt.

birth

C E N T.
II.

The Valen-
tinian tenets
respecting
the creation.

birth to three distinct genera of things. From that which was the fruit of Achamoth's apprehension or fear were produced the various descriptions of animals; from the offspring of her sorrow the evil angels, of whom the principal one, that is, the devil, had his habitation in the air below Demiurgus; and from that which had flowed from her anxiety, the elements of the world, all of which had been tempered with fire. Man was compounded by Demiurgus of both substances, the material and the animal, and enveloped by him with an external sensible body as with a tunic or mantle. To these two constituent parts of man, a portion of the spiritual or celestial substance was added by Achamoth, the mother of Demiurgus, but entirely without the knowledge of her son. The outward corporeal frame of each individual man, therefore, was said, by ancient authors, to comprise, as it were, three men; 1st, The material man, who was incapable of salvation; 2dly, The animal man, who might be either saved or lost; and, 3dly, The spiritual man, who could never perish, having been generated of the celestial or divine substance [s].

LVII. The

[s] The particulars here stated are not, it must be confessed, handed down to us by ancient writers in a manner so determinate, full, and perspicuous as might be wished. By no one, however, who will be at the pains of comparing with each other, all the different branches of the Valentinian system of discipline, can any difficulty be experienced in comprehending what it was that these authors in reality meant to convey. Man, according to Valentine, was compounded of a twofold body, the one internal, the other external; as likewise, of a twofold soul. The internal body consisted of fluid matter; the external one, which he speaks of as a tunic enveloping the one within, was framed

of

LVII. The Founder of the world, having perfected the work which he had undertaken, became

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ.

of matter that had remained dense and concrete. The latter was perceptible by the senses, the former not. This twofold body Irenæus and other ancient writers denominate *the material man*; but whether in the Valentinian sense, or merely according to their own understanding of the matter, I am unable to determine. Dissolution inevitably awaited this *material man*, or, more properly speaking, this corporeal frame of the man, after which it would be again absorbed in the grand mass of matter from whence it had been originally taken. For the Valentinians, like all the other Gnostic sects, were constrained by the nature of their principles to deny every possibility of a future resurrection of the body. Of the twofold soul possessed by man, according to the Valentinian theory, the one was taken by Demiurgus from the *animal substance* or matter, that is, as is sufficiently evident from the more subtle and ethereal species of matter, or that of which the soul of the world was constituted and likewise the heavens framed. This soul is that which contains within it the vital principle, as also the faculties of sense and perception, and was by ancient writers termed *the animal man*. The ultimate fate of this soul might be either perdition or salvation. This is to be understood thus: if the sensitive soul should forsake the worship of Demiurgus and his associates, and, turning itself to the Supreme Deity, should resist every unlawful appetite, and submit its faculties to the direction of the rational soul, which is the same thing as placing itself under the dominion of right reason, it would in time coalesce, to a certain degree, with the rational or celestial soul, and in this way obtain for itself immortality. Should this same soul, however, pursue an opposite course, and, spurning at the dominion of the rational soul, prefer continuing under the government of the senses, it would, on the dissolution of the body, return to the soul of the world, or that more subtle species of matter from whence it was originally taken. The other soul, or that which was conferred upon man by Acha-moth, and which ancient writers denominate *the spiritual man*, is the rational mind, which, from its very nature is immortal, having been taken from the divine substance of which the Æons consist. That this soul should perish must be impossible, since it would be the very height of absurdity to suppose

C E N T.

II.

The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ.

came at length so puffed up with arrogance and pride as to imagine that he himself was the only true God, and in consequence thereof to arrogate to himself, by the mouths of divers prophets which he dispatched to the Jewish people, the honours due to the Supreme Deity. His example as to this being followed by his associates, the presidents or rulers of the celestial orbs, as well as by the minor angels, who were invested with dominion over the different parts of this universe, every knowledge of the real and only Supreme God was gradually obliterated from the minds of the human race, the generality of mortals resigning themselves wholly to the empire of their lusts, and turning a deaf ear to all

suppose any part of the divine essence obnoxious to decay ; wherefore, at some time or other, either sooner or later, it must of necessity ascend to the regions above, not indeed to the Pleroma itself, where none but natures of the highest and most perfect order reside, but to that vast region of space inhabited by its mother Achamoth. In these his tenets respecting man, Valentine differed widely from the rest of the Gnostics, provided the sentiments of these latter have not been curtailed or abridged by ancient authors, but been handed down to us whole and entire. As to the reason that induced Achamoth to add to the sensitive soul another of a better and more noble description, *viz.* a rational one, it appears to me very easily to be discovered. Achamoth was naturally inclined to favour the sensitive soul, inasmuch as it was her own offspring, and consequently felt desirous, if by any means the thing could be brought about, to accomplish its salvation. Hence she was induced to give it, for an associate or companion, a particle of the divine essence, or a celestial soul, hoping, that by means of this alliance, the sensitive soul might be corrected, and, in addition thereto, be imbued with a knowledge of the Supreme Deity. In support and confirmation of this part of his discipline, there can be no doubt but that Valentine availed himself of all those passages that are to be met with in St. Paul's epistles respecting appetite opposing itself to reason, and the contentions between the flesh and the spirit.

all the suggestions of reason [t]. With a view to the extrication of mankind from this deplorable state, Christ, who was compounded both of the animal and the spiritual substance, and was furnished, moreover, with a sensitive body, (composed however of ethereal matter,) descended from the regions above to this nether world, passing through the body of Mary, without contamination, as water does through a conduit. Upon the baptism of this celestial guest by John in the waters of Jordan, Jesus, an Æon of the highest order, descended on him in the form of a dove [u]. The divine man, thus constituted, immediately

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ.

[t] These particulars are but very obscurely handed down by Irenæus and others. By calling in, however, the assistance of the various other Gnostic systems, and collating the different parts of the Valentinian scheme with each other, we have been enabled, as we trust, to throw some little additional light on the subject, and to place it in such a point of view as may bring the reader acquainted with the true nature and internal economy of Valentinianism in all its branches.

[u] As to the opinion entertained by Valentine respecting Christ, or the Saviour, we are left, by the early Christian writers, as much in the dark as we are with regard to the Valentinian tenets respecting man. The Saviour, they say, was represented by Valentine as consisting of four parts: a spiritual part, an animal part, a corporeal part, and, finally, a celestial part, or the real Saviour, which, assuming the form of a dove, descended upon Christ at his baptism. Now to this partition, which, by the bye, I believe not to have originated with Valentine, but to have been purely the invention of Irenæus, it may perhaps be scarcely worth the while to take any formal exception; but it is certainly far from being well conceived, and adapts itself but awkwardly to the subject. The Valentinian Saviour, like the Saviour recognized by all other Christians, was constituted of an union of the Son of God with man, but he differed materially from the Saviour of other Christians in this, that he consisted of two persons, of whom the divine one continued with that which was human merely for a few years, in order that the

C E N T. immediately commenced, by means of discourses,
 II. miracles, and denunciations, a most vigorous
 attack

The Valen-
 tinian tenets
 respecting
 Christ.

important legation to mankind might be fulfilled, and took his departure when the latter was about to undergo capital punishment. The human person, or man, should seem to have been looked upon as in a great measure resembling other men; for we find a two-fold soul ascribed to it, the one divine or rational, which is termed by ancient writers the *spiritual part of Christ*, the other sensitive, percipient, the seat of appetites and aversions, and which is styled by authors of antiquity the *animal part of Christ*. With this two-fold soul they likewise conjoined a body. In the nature of its body, however, this human person differed very considerably from other mortals. For, in the first place, this its body was not twofold as the bodies of other men were held to be, the one internal and fluid, the other external and dense or solid, but merely a single, uncompounded corporeal frame. Again, this body was not composed of terrene matter, but of that which was subtile and ethereal, although visible or perceptible by the senses. For had Christ been clothed with a corporeal frame resembling ours, it would, according to the Valentinian scheme, have been possible that, yielding to the contagious influence of the body, he might have inclined to the sensitive or concupiscent soul, and stirred it up to contend for dominion with the divine or rational soul. In that human person, or man, with whom Jesus the Son of God, one of the most exalted of the *Æons*, consented to unite himself, it was but fitting that nothing should be contained which might oppose itself to right reason, but that every motion, every propensity and desire should be subject entirely to the dictates of the celestial mind. Wherefore he was not furnished with a terrene body, but adorned with one of pure ætheral or celestial mould. Hence also, in the last place, this human person was of necessity held by the Valentinians to have acquired nothing whatever from the Virgin Mary, but to have passed through her womb as water through a conduit. For had he adopted any, even the minutest particle from the body of Mary, it might, like leaven, have corrupted the whole mass, and generated in the sensitive soul, a propensity inimical to right reason; matter being considered by the Gnostics as the source or foundation of all our vices and depraved inclinations. As to the notions entertained by the Valentinians, respecting the Son of God; who, for a while, united him-
 self

attack on the tyranny of the founder of this world and his associates, whilst at the same time he re-instated mankind in the knowledge of the supreme Deity, and instructed them as to the mode of bringing into subjection that soul which is the seat of sensual appetite and all our irregular desires. Enraged at these proceedings, the Founder of the world caused Christ to be apprehended and crucified. Previously however to his undergoing this punishment, not only the Divine Jesus, the Son of the Deity, but also the rational soul with which he had been animated, took their departure out of him and fled away. It was his sensitive soul alone, therefore, that in conjunction with his ætheréal body, was affixed to the cross. Those mortals, who in obedience to the precepts of Christ, should renounce the worship of all false gods, the God of the Jews not excepted, and con-

C E N T.
II.
The Valen-
tinian tenets
respecting
Christ.

self to this very extraordinary and admirable human person, it is not necessary that I should say much: suffice it to observe, that although they regarded him as a Being of a very high and excellent nature, their ideas of him fell far short of those which Christians in general entertain of the Son of God. They consider him, it is true, as an Æon of the most exalted rank, begotten of the essence of the Deity, but neither in nature, degree, or power, is he placed by them on an equal footing with the father. From the particulars which I have thus enumerated, it must, I think, be strikingly apparent, how widely the Valentinian tenets, respecting the person of Christ, differ from ours. Upon the seizure and condemnation of Christ by the Jews, the Valentinians held, that not only the son of the Deity, or that Æon which had resided within him, took his departure, but also one of the souls by which he had been animated, namely, the rational or celestial one. It was the sensitive soul alone, they believed, that in conjunction with the etheréal body was affixed to the cross. From this, however, it is apparent, that the Valentinians must have conceived Christ to have actually suffered and died.

C E N T.
II.The Valen-
tinian tenets
respecting
Christ.

fining their adoration to the Supreme Father alone, should make the sensitive and concupiscent soul submit itself to the castigation and emendatory discipline of right reason, would obtain salvation for their souls of both descriptions, which, on the dissolution of the body, would be transferred to the regions of unbounded space adjoining the Pleroma, and there be made partakers of everlasting joy and felicity. The sensitive souls of those on the contrary, who should pursue an opposite course, and spurning at the controul of the rational soul, should persevere in upholding the cause of superstition, had no prospect whatever held out to them, but that of everlasting perdition [v]. When all those parts of the Divine nature, constituting what were termed celestial souls, should be delivered from the bondage of matter, and cleansed from

[v] Great as was the difference of opinion between the Valentinians and other Christians with regard to the person of Christ, it was equalled by their discrepance in sentiment respecting his function, and the cause for which he died. For Valentine did not believe that the sins of mankind had been expiated by the sufferings and death of Christ; neither did he believe that the Son of God, or even the rational soul of the man Christ, had been at all affected by such sufferings and death. According to him the only purpose for which the glorious Æon, termed Jesus, came into the world, was that he might offer terms of salvation to those souls in which is seated the faculty of sense and volition. The terms were that they should forsake the worship of all false gods, the God of the Jews, or founder of the world, not excepted, and devoting themselves to the Supreme and only true God, render, according to the example of Christ, all their propensities and desires subject to the controul of the rational or celestial mind. All that the Valentinians therefore ascribe to Christ, was his having communicated a knowledge of the true God to our benighted race, and taught by his precepts and example, that our desires were to be placed under the dominion of reason.

all

all impurity, Achamoth would, it was asserted, pass into the Pleroma, and there be united with Jesus as with a husband; whilst Demiurgus would proceed to take up his abode in those regions of space contiguous to the Pleroma, which had previously been the habitation of his mother. The spiritual or celestial souls, at the same time taking leave of the sensitive souls, their former companions, would, in like manner, ascend into the Pleroma, and for the future be associated with the angels: whilst the sensitive souls, or those of inferior order, would continue to experience the highest degree of felicity in the region without the Pleroma, under the dominion of Demiurgus. Finally, the fire that had been originally distributed throughout every part of the universe, would burst forth from its concealment, and involving the whole machine of the world in flame, produce its utter destruction [w].

That

C E N T.
II.

The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ.

[w] The Valentinian fable in its termination corresponds exactly with that of the Manichæans. A perfect agreement between them is also discoverable in not a few other particulars. This one circumstance alone is sufficient to place it beyond all controversy that the Gnostic discipline was, in a great measure, derived from the tenets of the oriental philosophers respecting the origin of evil. By not only Valentine, however, but others of the Gnostics, there was blended with those oriental maxims, no small portion of the idle conceits and physical opinions of the Egyptians. The general tendency of the Oriental, the Gnostic, and the Manichæan schemes is to inculcate, that this world was framed out of rude and vitiated matter, without the knowledge or consent of the Supreme Deity, and that either through accident or design, no inconsiderable portion of the divine or celestial substance was incorporated therewith. That the Deity is constantly endeavouring, by the assistance of right reason gradually to detach this portion of himself, or of the divine substance, and more particularly such part of it as is imprisoned within the bodies of the human race, from depraved matter, and once more to restore it to its origin in the realms of light. During the time necessarily required for the ac-

C E N T.

The Valentinian tenets respecting Christ.

That Valentine should have encouraged, or even countenanced in his followers any thing like moral depravity, or a sinful and flagitious course of life, is altogether impossible; since his injunctions were that the inferior soul of man should always be made to yield obedience to the one that was superior, or in other words to right reason. We, at the same time, however, feel no difficulty whatever in so far giving credit to Irenæus, and other ancient writers, as to believe that certain of his disciples and followers might have led a very disgraceful course of life, and endeavoured, by a perversion of the precepts of their master, to supply themselves with an excuse for plunging into vice and every species of iniquity [x].

LVIII. From

complishment of this object, he patiently tolerates the existence of this universe, or machine of the world, and may even be said, in a certain degree, to employ his power in upholding it. For such is the nature of its construction, that it nourishes within its bosom the seeds of its own destruction, *i. e.* an active and vigorous combustible principle, diffused throughout its whole frame, and which, unless it were kept in subjection by the Deity, would soon put an end to the world and every thing belonging to it. When all the souls of men, however, and every particle of the divine essence, shall have obtained a deliverance from matter, the Deity will no longer prevent this slumbering fire from bursting forth, but suffer it to issue from its caverns and recesses, and involve the whole corporeal universe in flames and destruction. This doctrine may have been exhibited by different sects under a variety of forms, some more subtle, others more homely and gross, some again more simple, others more refined and ingenious; but the sum and substance of the matter itself will be found to be in all the same.

[x] Much has been handed down to us by Irenæus, lib. i. c. vi. and much by other ancient authors respecting the wickedness and crimes of the Valentinians; whom they represent as having maintained that every thing was lawful for them, inasmuch as they had attained to the highest de-
gree

LVIII. From the Valentinian school are said to have issued not a few founders of other sects, CENT.
II.
who,

Inferior sects that owed their origin to the Valentinian school.

gree of divine knowledge ; and as having freely indulged in the violation of every law divine as well as human. By no ancient writer, however, is Valentine himself charged with any thing of this kind, nor do we any where find a depravity of morals attributed to the sect at large. The accusation of Irenæus extends merely to certain of the Valentinians. Hence, I think it is evident, that Valentine could not have countenanced his disciples in a vicious course of life ; but that certain of his followers, by giving a different interpretation to the precepts of their master from what he ever intended, endeavoured to make them a cloak for their iniquities. This might very easily occur. As it was the opinion of many of the Christians, that let a man only be possessed of faith and he might sin as much as he liked, so is it highly credible that certain of the Valentinians might maintain that when once a person had abstracted the soul from the body, and attained to that intimate knowledge of the true God, which they styled *γνωσις*, he could in no shape whatever be affected by the actions of the body. Into this grievous error they were indeed the more likely to fall, from their disbelief of the future resurrection of men's bodies. The Valentinian discipline itself, so far from countenancing men in a sinful wicked course of life, expressly inculcated that the way to eternal happiness lay open only to those souls who, after the example of Christ, should render all their propensities and desires subject to the celestial and imperishable soul ; or, in other words, to right reason. Irenæus, and others who have written after him, I know very well, relate that Valentine recognised three descriptions or classes of men ; *σωματικοί* or the corporeal ; *ψυχικοί*, or the animal ; and *πνευματικοί*, or the spiritual. The *corporeal* men, are the heathen, or the worshippers of false gods ; the *spiritual* men, the Valentinians or Gnostics ; and the *animal* men, all other Christians. Of these, the first must of necessity perish ; the second, by an equal necessity, must be saved ; the last are capable of being either saved or involved in perdition. That the spiritual men should busy themselves at all as to good works is perfectly unnecessary ; since it is impossible that they should perish. The animal men are under the necessity of cultivating piety. The corporeal men, inasmuch as they are entirely destitute of hope, may consider themselves as absolved from every law. Now if

C E N T. who, retaining the fundamental principles of their
 II. master's discipline, endeavoured, either by certain
 partial

Inferior sects
 that owed
 their origin
 to the Va-
 lentinian
 school.

such had been the doctrine taught by Valentine, it would certainly have been holding out an invitation to the greater part of the human race to indulge in every species of iniquity, and granting to his followers, in particular, the licence of doing whatever they might list. But the tenets which we thus find ascribed to Valentine by Irenæus and other ancient writers, are manifestly repugnant to various parts of the Valentinian discipline: and it is moreover certain that Valentine considered all men to be by nature equal; all endowed with a two-fold soul; and the gate of salvation as irrevocably closed against none. I therefore entertain not the least doubt but that these ancient authors understood his sentiments but very imperfectly, or else were, on some account or other, induced designedly to misrepresent them. That mankind were distributed by Valentine into three classes, the animal, the spiritual, and the corporeal, is what I by no means pretend to question; but he certainly never did think, nor was it possible he should think, that the corporeal class were destitute of souls, and, of necessity doomed to perdition. What he meant to say was doubtless this, that amongst men of the corporeal class, or the worshippers of false gods, the body commonly usurps the dominion, and stifles every energy and power of the soul. As long then as they should continue in that state, nothing was to be hoped for by them, upon the dissolution of the body; for if they died under such circumstances, the sensitive soul would perish, and the rational one, being incapable of death, would be transferred into another corporeal frame. After a similar manner ought we to understand what he says of men of the animal class. For his doctrine was, not that these were destitute of a rational soul, but that the sensitive and concupiscent soul had in them obtained the mastery so as to prevent the celestial soul from executing its office. They were therefore, according to him, nearer to salvation than those of the corporeal class, who referred every thing to the body, and totally neglected the soul. The class to which he gave the title of spiritual, consisted of those in whom that particle of the divine essence, the celestial mind, the seat of reason and of wisdom, enjoys the pre-eminence, and holds in subjection, not only the body, but also that other soul by which the body is acted upon and influenced. These must, of necessity, be saved, in-
 asmuch

partial emendations, or by a new exposition and arrangement, to improve upon the original plan, and communicate to it a more specious and imposing air. It should seem, however, not at all unlikely that the same thing which occurred in

C E N T.
II.

Inferior sects that owed their origin to the Valentinian school.

asmuch as they resemble Christ, and conduct themselves agreeably to his example. I have been obliged to speak the less distinctly respecting the difference in the two-fold soul with which Valentine considered man as having been endowed, in consequence of ancient authors having omitted to mark this difference with sufficient precision. This much however, is clearly to be perceived, that one was considered as being, by nature, immortal; the other as not being immortal by nature, but capable of becoming so upon yielding due obedience to the superior soul. It is also apparent that the former was looked upon as formed of the divine substance, or that whereof the Deity himself consists; the latter as constituted of the more noble part of matter, or such as was made use of in the framing of the heavens. We are not however able to speak with equal confidence, as to the nature or extent of the virtues or powers which each was supposed to possess. Valentine, it is true, represents the superior soul, as the immediate seat or residence of rationality and wisdom: but at the same time he places a certain sort of reason also in the inferior soul. For he enjoins this latter to attend to the dictates and direction of the superior soul, a thing, that without reason and intelligence it must have been utterly incapable of doing. It had also the power of either obeying or resisting the superior soul; and must consequently, in addition to reason, have been endowed with liberty or freedom of will, a thing not possessed by the superior soul. These, as well as various other particulars of the Valentinian discipline, admit not in the present day, of an explication altogether satisfactory, inasmuch as ancient writers are silent as to many things of essential importance to a right understanding of the subject, whilst they, at the same time pervert other things, and not unfrequently give us as the genuine tenets of Valentine, what are merely inferences or deductions drawn by themselves. Finally, in their account of this man's doctrines and opinions, every thing like method or order, is beyond all measure disregarded; and various things which ought to have been associated together and brought into one view, are disunited and kept far apart.

the

C E N T.
II.

Inferior sects
that owed
their origin
to the Va-
lentinian
school.

the case of Simon Magus, again took place with regard to Valentine; namely, that every one who professed sentiments, bearing the least affinity or resemblance to his opinions, was at once, without farther evidence, accounted to be of the number of his disciples. Amongst those who are thus reported to have derived the first rudiments of their discipline from Valentine, we may first notice Ptolemy, the founder of the sect of the Ptolemites, a man of ingenuity and eloquence, who differed widely from the general body of the Valentinians in his tenets respecting the Æons, as well as in regard to some other points. His Æons are not only differently named and arranged from those of his reputed preceptor, but he appears likewise to have considered them merely in the light of divine attributes or virtues [y]. Far different were the sentiments of Secundus, who is commemorated by Irenæus as a

[y] Respecting Ptolemy, in addition to Irenæus, Tertulian, (*Lib. contr. Valent. c. iv. p. 290.*) Augustine and others, I would recommend the reader particularly to consult Epiphanius, *Hæres. XXXIII. p. 216, 222.*, who gives us a letter of his to a woman named Flora, which was afterwards published more correctly by J. Ernest. Grabe, in his *Spicilegium Patrum et Hæreticorum*, tom. ii. p. 69. In this letter he communicates, without reserve, his sentiments respecting the law of Moses, declaring it, in his opinion, not to have been derived from the Supreme Deity; but to have been framed in part by the Jewish doctors, in part by Moses, and in part by Demiurgus, or the founder of this world. This opinion respecting the origin of the law of Moses, it has not been unusual for learned men to consider as peculiar to Ptolemy; but as to this, they are unquestionably in an error. That the Jewish law did not owe its origin to the Supreme Being, was an article of common belief throughout the whole Gnostic school, although the leaders of the different sects into which it branched might differ somewhat in the mode of expressing their sentiments on the subject. Even Valentine himself did not think otherwise.

very

Inferior sects
that owed
their origin
to the Va-
lentinian
school.

very distinguished disciple of the Valentinian school. According to him the Æons were real substances or persons, and what is particularly deserving of remark, he placed at the head of them two principles, light and darkness; a circumstance which plainly proves him to have borrowed more from the Oriental philosophy than his master had done, and also indicates in him somewhat of an inclination to the discipline of the Manichees [z]. A third disciple of the Valentinian school, not at all inferior to these in point of fame, indeed, rather their superior, was Heracleon, an author whom we find Clement of Alexandria and Origen repeatedly citing, for the purpose of exposing and confuting his errors. Whether Heracleon dissented in reality from Valentine, or merely in words and phrases, and if there was really a difference between them, in what such difference consisted, and what were the peculiar opinions or tenets of the former, are points, which, in the present day, it will be found far from easy to determine [a].

[z] Vid. Irenæus, lib. i. cap. xi. Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xxxi. Augustin. *de Hæres.* cap. xii. It is certain that much difference of opinion subsisted between Ptolemy and Secundus, as to the nature of the Æons: the one considering them as merely modes or virtues of the Divine nature, the other as real substances or persons; and each contending that his own sentiments on the subject corresponded with those which had been entertained by their master. Respecting the nature and true grounds of this dispute, one might readily engage in much learned disquisition; but as there is no necessity for it, I shall content myself merely with observing, that from this controversy, Valentine appears to have been a man of some genius certainly; but at the same time one of a weak indecisive mind, who indeed propounded many new opinions, but left the greater part of them so ill defined, as to afford matter for continual disputes amongst his disciples.

[a] Vid. J. Ernest. Grabe. *Spicileg. Patrum et Hæreticor.* tom. ii. p. 82. & seq.

C E N T.

II.

Marcus and
Colarbasus.

LIX. Amongst the disciples of Valentine we find ancient authors agree also in reckoning (though on what authority is uncertain) one Marcus, the founder of the sect of the Marcians, and a Colarbasus, who was some how or other connected with this Marcus, either as an associate, a pupil, or a preceptor. Of Colarbasus not much is handed down to us by either Irenæus or any other writer. What little they do say of him almost entirely respects his tenets concerning the Æons, whom, it appears, he distributed, named, and associated in a very different way from Valentine. To enter further, therefore, into the history of this man's opinions would be only a waste of words. Concerning Marcus, however, many things are left us on record, particularly by Irenæus. Of these some may easily be reconciled with the principles of the Valentinian discipline, but others are entirely new, and, at the same time, exceedingly obscure, so much so indeed as scarcely to admit of explanation.

Among other notable attainments and exploits he is said to have discovered very profound mysteries in the Greek letters, to have studied magic, worked miracles by the assistance of demons, debauched women, instilled into his followers the vilest of principles, and compiled a code of the most puerile and absurd institutions. In the heavy catalogue of accusations thus brought against him, some particulars were no doubt well founded, others wholly fictitious, and some deduced from a misapprehension, or a wrong interpretation of his opinions. To draw the proper line of distinction between the one and the other of these, might not perhaps be altogether beyond the power of a person intimately conversant with

C E N T.

II.

Marcus and
Colarbasus.

with the Gnostic discipline; but it would be a work replete with labour and fatigue. Contemplating the history of this man with every possible degree of candour, and even rejecting, as spurious, every part of what are stated to have been the Marcossian tenets, except such things as could not possibly have been feigned, it will nevertheless be found impossible to form a more lenient judgment of Marcus than this: That he was a man of the Jewish persuasion, in all probability neither wicked nor impious; but, at the same time, one who exercised his mental powers only to make himself ridiculous, and who, having his brain bewildered with Oriental, Egyptian, and Jewish extravagancies, converted the universal religion, which he pretended to profess, into a system of the most egregious nonsense and deformity [b].

LX. Ancient

[b] Respecting the tenets of Marcus, and the sect of the Marcossians founded by him, which, extending itself through various regions, particularly Gaul, imposed on many of the more plain and simple of the Christians, Irenæus treats much at large, (*Adv. Hæres.* lib. i. cap. xiv. & seq.) although in a very immethodical, unconnected manner. The subject has also been taken up after him by others. Of these tenets we need only direct our attention to such as it was utterly impossible that either Irenæus or any other writer should have feigned, to be convinced that the man must have been disordered in his brain, indeed entirely out of his wits. The evidence of this is, in fact, so glaringly obvious, that we can only wonder it should ever have entered into the heads of learned men to exercise their genius in endeavours to reclaim and purify so incorrigible and hopeless a subject. By way of specimen, we will present the reader with the Marcossian tenets respecting the force and power of the Greek letters, as they are given us by Irenæus, nearly in the very words of Marcus himself. τὰ ὄντα ἔν (the reader will understand that these are the words of one of the Supreme Æons whom Marcus represents as having been sent to him in the form of a woman) τὰ ὄντα ἔν τὰ.

CENT.

II.

Bardefanes.

LX. Ancient writers are also agreed in reckoning, as the disciples of Valentine (in addition

τὰ παρ' ὑμῖν ἑκοσι τέσσαρα γράμματα ἀπορροίας ὑπάρχειν γίνωσκε των τριῶν δυνάμεων ἑκοντικῆς, των περιεχουσῶν τον ὅλον των ἄνω σοιχείων τον ἀριθμόν· τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἄζωνα γράμματα ἑνέα νόμισον εἶναι τε πατρὸς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας, διὰ τὸ ἀφάνους αὐτοῦ εἶναι, τῆς ἐξ ἀρχῆς καὶ ἀνεκκαλήτης· τὰ δὲ ἡμίφωνα ὀκτώ, ὄντα τε λόγῳ καὶ τῆς ζωῆς, διὰ τὸ μέσα ἄσπερ ὑπάρχειν των τε ἀφάνων καὶ των φωνέντων· καὶ ἀναδέχισθαι των μὲν ὑπερθεν την ἀπόρροϊαν, των ὑπὲρ αὐτὴν την ἀναφορὰν· τὰ δὲ φωνέντα καὶ αὐτὰ ἑπτὰ ὄντα τε ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἐπεὶ διὰ του ἀνθρώπου φωνὴν προελθῆσα ἐμῶρρωσε τὰ ὅλα. ὁ γὰρ ἦχος τῆς φωνῆς μορφὴν αὐτῶν περιεποίησεν. *Has igitur quæ apud nos sunt viginti quatuor litteræ, emanationes esse intellige trium virtutum imaginales, earum quæ continent universum, quæ sunt sursum elementorum numerum. Mutas enim litteras novem puta esse patris et veritatis, quoniam sine voce sint, id est, inenarrabiles et ineloquibiles. Semivocales autem cum sint οὐλο, Logi esse et Zoës, quoniam quasi mediæ sint inter mutas et vocales, et recipere eorum quidem quæ supersunt emanationem, eorum vero quæ subsunt elevationem. Vocales autem et ipsas septem esse, anthropi et ecclesiæ, quoniam per anthropum vox progrediens formavit omnia. Sonus enim vocis firmam eis circumdedit.* Irenæus, lib. i. cap. xiv. § 5. p. 70. Communications, similarly subtle, and even still more ridiculous and obscure, respecting the force and properties of the Greek letters, and their accordance with divine matters, both precede and follow the above. That it should ever have entered into the mind of Irenæus or any other person to have invented things like these, and ascribed them to Marcus, by way of bringing him into discredit, is not to be believed. They are, in fact, taken from his writings, and given in his own words. Now, can any one, let me ask, who is himself in possession of his senses, for a moment regard these sublime mysteries as the offspring of a sound and rational mind? But I will add another specimen, which must, I think, place it beyond all question, that Marcus and his followers altogether turned their backs on every principle of true wisdom, and were devoted to the silly conceits and extravagancies of the Egyptians. In Irenæus are to be found certain prayers, which the Marcians dictated to dying people, to be recited when, in their journey to the celestial regions, they came to pass through the provinces of Demiurgus and his associates. Iren. lib. i. cap. xxi. § 3. p. 97. In these prayers also, there is no room to suspect any thing like fraud

dition to others whom we deem it unnecessary to notice, inasmuch as they are scarcely known, C E N T.
II.
even Bardesanes.

fraud or misapprehension. If the sense or meaning of them be attended to, they will be found to have a near resemblance to those of a similar kind in use with the Ophites, which are preserved by Origen in his work *contra celsum*, although they certainly differ from them somewhat in words. They are, moreover, of such a description as to preclude every idea of their having been invented by any adversary of the Marcōsian sect. It was the opinion, then, of the Marcōsians, as well as of the Ophites and others of the Gnostics, and derived by them, as I conceive, from the Egyptians, that the souls of the good and virtuous, upon taking leave of the body, and proceeding to the mansions above, had to pass through the celestial orbs, and the planets or wandering stars, which were under the dominion of Demiurgus and other most powerful Genii, who were completely adverse to this passage of souls through their domains, and particularly anxious to arrest their progress. The efforts of these invidious tyrants, however, might, it was believed, by means of certain words and phrases, be so far rendered abortive as to prevent their impeding souls in their ascent to the Deity; and it was of course considered as expedient that dying persons should provide themselves with prayers and formulæ of this description: *τάτης δὲ τῆς περὶ τον Δημιουργόν ἀκούσαντας*, (we give the words of Irenæus) *σφόδρα ταραχθῆναι, καὶ καταγῶναι αὐτῶν τῆς βίης, καὶ τοὺς γένους τῆς μητρός· αὐτὸν δὲ πορευθῆναι εἰς τὰ ἴδια ῥήσαντα τον δεσμόν αὐτοῦ, τῆς τῆν ψυχῆν·*
Hæc autem eos qui circa Demiurgum sunt audientes, valde conturbari, et reprehendere suam radicem, et genus matris: ipsos autem (the souls which had taken their leave of the body), *abire in sua, projicientes nodos ipsorum, id est, animam*, meaning the sensitive soul itself, or what of the sensitive soul these celestial souls might have brought with them from the body. For any one to attempt to explain away the utter inanity and absurdity of things like these, appears to me a most miserable abuse both of learning and talents. I would not, however, be understood as denying that some things with which the Marcōsian sect is reproached by Irenæus and others, might either be misunderstood by ignorant people unacquainted with the force of the words and terms made use of, or unfairly represented by heedless and malevolent spectators, to whom every thing appeared vile and flagitious that was unusual with the Christians; amongst which
I reckon

C E N T. even by name at this day), those two very celebrated characters, Bardesanes and Tatian, from both

II.

Bardesanes.

I reckon what is reported respecting the forcery and delusive tricks, or if the reader had rather, the religious fallacies of Marcus, which appear to me unworthy of the least credit, inasmuch as it is to be supported by no kind of argument, and may be invalidated on several grounds. Whatever Irenæus has transmitted to us respecting things of this sort, appears to have been collected from the testimony of certain women, who might have easily been imposed upon, and under the hope of obtaining for themselves a more ready re-admission into the congregation of the faithful, whom for a while they had deserted, might possibly have been induced to embellish their narration in a way not exactly corresponding with the truth. It is said, for example, that in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Marcus was accustomed, either by means of magic or some sort of juggling, to tinge the wine in the chalice with a red or purple colour. ποτηρία ὄνω κεκραμένα (says Irenæus, lib. i. cap. xiii. p. 60.) προσποιημένος εὐχαρισεῖν, καὶ ἐπὶ πλεόν εκτέινων τον λόγον της ἐπικλησεως, προφύερα καὶ ἐρυθρὰ ἀνεφαίνεσθαι ποίει· ὡς δοκεῖν τον οἶνον των ὑπὲρ τὰ ὅλα χάριν το αἷμα το ἑαυτῆς εἶζειν ἐν τῷ ἐκείνῳ ποτηρίῳ διὰ τῆς ἐπικλησεως αὐτης. *Pro calice vino misto, fingens se gratias agere, & multum producens verba invocationis purpureus & rubicundus calix ut appareat facit, ita ut videatur gratia ab iis qui sunt supra omnia (i. e. the Æons) sanguinem suum in illius calicem per ejus invocationem stillare.* Now with regard to this, learned men have denied, and as I think, rightly, that for the accomplishment of a thing of this sort any recourse to magic could be necessary. They suspect nevertheless, that Marcus must in some way or other have deluded the eyes of the beholders. But, for my own part, I have not the least doubt but that in this case a very innocent practice, and one that originated from a good design, has been exposed to unmerited reproach through the mistake of some spectator who was unacquainted with the Marcosian discipline. The custom with this sect no doubt was, that the chalice should be filled first with white wine, probably by way of representing, by a sort of figure, the purity and sanctity of Christ's blood. In the act of consecration, however, it was the usage for the priest to mingle a portion of red wine with the white, so as to make the contents of the chalice in some sort resemble blood, and thereby excite in the minds of those present,

both of whom the cause of Christianity derived
no inconsiderable degree of benefit, although
each

CENT.
II.
Bardesanes.

present, a more lively recollection of the Redeemer's sacrifice. Possibly it might happen, that this mingling of the red wine with the white by the priest, might escape the observation of certain persons who chanced to be occasional witnesses of the public worship of the Marcosians, and that upon perceiving red wine distributed in the cup, without being aware that any other than white wine had been poured into it, they were led to conclude that this change must have been wrought by the assistance of some evil spirit, and to represent the matter in this light to others. Who is there that can be ignorant of the multitude of errors to which mistakes of this kind give rise? My opinion is precisely the same with regard to the other miracle which is subsequently related by Irenæus. On the table, around which it was customary for the Marcosians to assemble when celebrating the Lord's supper, was placed a cup of a much larger size than the chalice out of which the communicants drank. Into this larger cup it was the usage for the priest to pour what little portion of the wine might be left by the communicants in the chalice, or smaller cup; and the consequence, we are told, was, that these few drops became on a sudden so amplified as to fill such larger vessel, even to overflowing, with liquor of an ensanguined colour. Irenæus recounts this as one of the prodigies, or if the reader had rather, one of the frauds of Marcus; for I must own that his words admit of being taken in either sense: *καὶ τοιαῦτά τινα ἐπιπῶν, καὶ ἐξοιζήσας τὸν ταλαίπωρον θαυματοποιῶς ἀνεφάνη, τὴν μεγάλην πληρωθέντος ἐκ τῆς μικρῆς ποτηρίου ὥστε καὶ ὑπερεκχεῖσθαι ἐξ αὐτῆς. Dein cum talia quedam dixit, et infelicem illam (mulierem) ad insaniam adegit, tum mirabilia facere videtur, majore calice minore ita ut (poculum) redundaret impleto.* But it is easily to be collected, even from the words of Irenæus himself, by any one who shall duly attend to them, although it must be acknowledged that his manner of expressing himself in this passage is very confused and obscure, that no trick or deception was actually practised in this case, and that the idea of the thing's having been accomplished by any fraudulent or preternatural operation in all probability originated with certain ignorant or heedless and prejudiced spectators. With the Marcosians it was not the custom for several to partake in succession of one cup, as is the practice with other Christians, but a separate portion of wine was

C E N T.

II.

Bardefanes.

each of them became the parent of a new sect, and patronized several very important errors. In this, however, it is manifest that the authors to whom we allude must have laboured under a mistake, since the doctrine of Bardefanes, as well as that of Tatian, is very considerably removed from the Valentinian principles and discipline. Each had a manifest leaning to the oriental opinions which were cherished by the Gnostics respecting the origin of all things, and more particularly evil; but by neither was the plan of the Gnostics adhered to in endeavouring to produce an accommodation between those tenets and the principles of Christianity. Bardefanes, who was born of Christian parents at Edeffa in Mesopotamia, and appears to have been a man of very considerable talents and erudition, had, by his writings, acquired for himself no little degree of reputation under the reigns of the emperors Marcus Antoninus and Lucius Verus; but having unluckily been induced to espouse the oriental (or, as ancient writers term them,

given to each person by the priest. When any one did not drink the whole of what was thus handed to him, the remainder was poured into a larger cup that stood on the table; and the chalice was replenished with a fresh quantity of wine for the person next in rotation. Whatever was left in the smaller cup being thus constantly emptied into the larger one, the latter of course, in time, became full; nor can I bring myself to believe that this sect could have been so stupid and silly as to regard a thing of such necessary occurrence in the light of a miracle. What I suspect is, that certain occasional spectators of the Marcasian rites, observing the wine to increase in the larger cup, which had been placed on the table empty, without perceiving the actual cause by which such increase was produced, were hastily induced to imagine that it was either accomplished by the assistance of some evil demon, or otherwise brought about by some more subtle kind of fraud.

Valen-

Valentinian) notions, respecting the existence of two principles, he devoted himself, for a while, to the propagation of an erroneous doctrine; and, being possessed of great subtilty and address, succeeded in gaining over numerous converts, from whence sprung the sect of the *Bardeſanists* that flourished in Syria and the neighbouring regions [c]. After some time indeed, he again embraced

C E N T.

II.

Bardeſanes.

[c] Of Bardeſanes we find frequent mention made by ancient writers. His history is particularly entered into by (amongst others) Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. c. 30. p. 151. Epiphanius, *Heres.* lvi. p. 476. Theodoret. *Hæretic. Fabular.* lib. i. cap. 22. p. 208. Augustin. *de Hæresibus*, cap. xxxv. See also the *Chronicon Edessenum* apud Jos. Simon. Assemann. *Biblioth. Oriental. Vatican.* tom. i. p. 389. et seq. Various extracts from his writings are also to be met with in Eusebius *de Preparat. Evangelica*, Porphyry *de Abstinentia*, and the works of other ancient authors, which leave us in no doubt as to his genius and abilities. The nature of his discipline is by no one more clearly explained than by Origen, *Dialog. contra Marcionitas*, sect. iii. p. 70. & seq. edit. Wetſen. From all these different sources, however, it is impossible for any one to obtain any thing like a full and complete history of the life of Bardeſanes, or a perfect and satisfactory conception of his philosophy and religion. By more modern writers, therefore, who have undertaken to illustrate the history of this heresiarch and his tenets (the most distinguished of whom, in addition to Tillemont, a very laborious and accurate writer, certainly, but one by no means deserving of the very high degree of reputation which he enjoys, and Assemann, to whom I have just above referred, are Fred. Strunzius in his *Historia Bardeſanis et Bardeſanistarum*, published at Wittenburg in 4to. and Isaac Beaufobre in his *Histoire de Manichee*, vol. ii. p. 128.), we find several things left involved in obscurity, and much of uncertain conjecture intermixed with real history. Respecting the origin of the lapse of Bardeſanes a different account is given by Eusebius from what we meet with in Epiphanius. By the former, Bardeſanes is represented as having been addicted to the Valentinian tenets previously to his embracing the orthodox faith, whereas the latter states him to have first of all cherished the true faith, and then to have been seduced

C E N T.
 II.
 Bardesanes.

embraced the orthodox faith, and became the determined opponent of certain of those errors of which he had formerly been the distinguished patron and defender; but the poison which he had imbibed was never thoroughly eradicated from his mind [*d*], nor was he ever capable of healing the cruel wound which his conduct had given to the interests of Christianity. His doctrine was, that all things had originated from two principles; the one good, *i. e.* the Deity; the other evil, *viz.* the Prince and Governor of matter, which he held to be eternal and intrinsically corrupt. The formation of the world, and the creation of mankind, he ascribed to the supreme and superlatively excellent Deity; but a world of an infinitely better constitution than the one which we at present inhabit, and mankind of a nature vastly superior to that of the human race at this day [*e*]. The primitive world, according

into error by the Valentinians. If, as is most probable, Bardesanes was born of Christian parents, the account given by Epiphanius is certainly the one best entitled to credit, and I have therefore, without scruple, adopted it.

[*d*] This is expressly stated by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. 30. and might, if it were necessary, be confirmed by the testimony of other writers. Bardesanes in fact discarded whatever was so obviously repugnant to the principles of Christianity as not to admit of any thing like a reconciliation therewith, such, for instance, as the Valentinian tenets respecting an evil principle, the eternity of matter, the body of Christ, the return of our mortal frames to matter without any hope of a future resurrection to life, and the like; but as to the notion of sin having owed its origin to matter, and various other opinions which he had before been led to espouse, he retained them to the last, and availed himself of their assistance in expounding a part of the Christian religion.

[*e*] This notion respecting the origin of the world and of mankind most decisively separates Bardesanes from Valentinus and every other Gnostic leader, by all of whom the world

according to Bardesanes, was entirely free from every species of evil; and man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, was compounded of a celestial mind joined to an aërial or highly subtilized body. When the Prince or Governor of matter, however, had succeeded in seducing the innocent soul into sin, the Deity permitted him to go the further length of enveloping man with a dense and cumbrous body, composed of depraved matter; and, by way of punishing the human race for their defection, allowed this author of all evil to mar the fair face of the world, and despoil it of the greatest part of its beauty [*f*]. Hence the perpetual contention between

C E N T.
II.
Bardesanes.

world was considered as having been framed, in opposition to the will of the Deity, by a being to whom they gave the title of Demiurgus.

[*f*] It may not be amiss to apprize the reader that I cannot pretend to vouch the authority of ancient writers for every thing which I have here stated. In none of these authors, for instance, is there to be found any thing respecting a primitive world created by God, and a posterior world corrupted through the machinations of the Prince or Governor of matter; but they all speak as if Bardesanes had imagined the universe, as it is at present constituted, to have been the work of the Supreme Deity, and consequently that the world, as we now behold it, differs in no respect from the world as it existed prior to the lapse or transgression of souls. Again, they appear to intimate it as his belief, that men, in consequence of their disobedience, were, by way of punishment, invested by the Deity himself with depraved or vitiated material bodies. But I will venture to assert, that unless we would make Bardesanes inconsistent with himself, it is impossible to attribute to him sentiments like the above. For how could any man, who considered the Deity as exempt from every species of evil, and, at the same time regarded matter, not only as intrinsically corrupt, but also as subject to the dominion of an evil ruler, how, let me ask, could any man, viewing things in this light, have believed that the all-good Deity would either have invaded the vile and contaminated province

C E N T.

II.

Bardesanes.

between reason and appetite by which mankind are tormented in the present day; for the gross and corrupt material body with which man became thus invested is ever impelling the soul to acts of iniquity and sin. For the purpose of putting an end to this calamitous state of things, Jesus, according to this heresiarch, descended from the mansions above, and

vince of his adversary and enemy, or moved a finger in giving arrangement or distribution to vitiated matter, or, lastly, have placed souls, generated of himself, in a region so thoroughly devoted to iniquity? By no kind of sophistry could acts like these have been reconciled with a nature decidedly hostile to every thing evil. Bardesanes, therefore, must either have recognised a primitive world, the workmanship of the Deity, in contradistinction to a later one that had been corrupted by the author of all evil, or he must have believed in the existence of a paradise beyond the confines of this world, and conceived the universe which we inhabit, to have been framed by the Prince or Governor of matter in humble imitation of such paradise. In the second place, how could it be possible for a man, who was obviously anxious to exempt the Deity from every imputation of evil, to have believed that this all-perfect Being was induced, in consequence of the fall of the human race, to cloath them with a vitiated body, composed of matter that was under the dominion of his adversary, and teeming with every corrupt and depraved appetite? Can that Being be deemed in an absolute sense good, who is the author or cause of sinful or evil conduct in others? I have no doubt, therefore, but that, in expounding the doctrine of Bardesanes respecting the conjunction of the body with the soul, there must have been something or other omitted by Origen and the rest of the ancient writers. According to the opinion which I have been led to form on the subject, Bardesanes must have held either that the Deity, in consequence of man's having sinned, and thus rendered himself subject to the dominion of the malicious ruler of matter, would not interfere to prevent the latter from encumbering the human race with bodies formed of clay; or else that mankind had, in an unguarded moment, through the machinations of the Author of all evil, been so far beguiled, or rather besotted, as to fall in love with the bodies which he presented to them, and assume them of their own accord.

assumed

assumed a corporeal frame; a frame, however, not at all resembling the bodies with which the human race are enveloped, but of a celestial and ethereal nature. It was therefore in appearance merely that this heavenly guest was brought forth, or that he ate, suffered, and underwent death; for that in reality he neither was born, nor did he die [g]. The doctrine, which he represented Jesus as having taught, was that the souls of men should yield in nothing to the influence of the body; but be constantly striving to release themselves from the chains of vitiated matter. On the dissolution of the material body, the souls who had availed themselves of the instruction thus afforded them, would, he held, ascend, invested with their original bodies of ethereal mould, into the presence of the Supreme Deity; whilst the terrene and external body itself, which had, in fact, been the prison of the soul, and the origin or fountain of all its transgressions, would, he supposed, again be absorbed in the vast material mass from whence it had been taken, without the least hope of reviviscence or a future resurrection.

C E N T.
II.
Bardesanes.

LXI. Tatian, who was a native of Assyria, and a man of considerable learning and talents, having, according to his own account [b],
from

Tatian.

[g] The opinion thus entertained by Bardesanes respecting the celestial or ethereal nature of Christ's body, must, unless I am much mistaken, have been the only reason that induced ancient writers to class him with the Valentinians, with whom he held scarcely any thing else in common.

[b] In his oration "to the Greeks," which has escaped the fate of his other writings, and remains extant at this day. Although not entirely free from errors, it is a discourse replete with various erudition, and written in a

CENT.

II.

Tatian.

from a perusal of the sacred writings been led to entertain a favourable opinion of Christianity, betook himself to Rome, and there assiduously laboured in cultivating a more intimate acquaintance with its nature and principles, under the tuition of the celebrated Justin Martyr. The latter having been called upon to lay down his life in the cause of his Divine master, Tatian, at first opened a school in the city of Rome, but at length was induced to return to his native country, where, either on the instigation of his own mind, (for he was naturally of an austere disposition,) or by the persuasion of others, he was led to embrace the tenets of those who, in expounding the principles of Christianity, called in the assistance of the oriental philosophic notions respecting the Deity, matter, the world, and the human soul. The exact form of the religion which he invented, or otherwise adopted, is not to be collected from any ancient writer [*i*]. Of this much indeed we are certain, that it must have possessed somewhat of the Valentinian cast, since, besides ascribing great honour to the Æons, we find that it recognised a distinction between the founder of the world and the Supreme Deity, and disclaimed the notion of

style by no means deficient in polish. It is commonly to be found annexed to the works of Justin Martyr, and was in 1700, published separately at Oxford, in 8vo., accompanied with various annotations, by an English student of the name of Worth.

[*i*] Besides Irenæus, Epiphanius, and others, who have written expressly on the subject of the early Christian sects and heresies, there are many, who, in treating on other topics, have incidentally been led to make mention of Tatian: from none, however, can he be said to have received that measure of attention to which a man of his eminence was certainly entitled.

Christ's

Christ's having assumed a real body [k]. There can therefore be no difficulty in accounting for the circumstance of Tatian's having been regarded by many as a disciple of the Valentinian school. It is, however, equally certain, that as well in other things, as in the precepts which relate to morality, the disagreement that existed between the system of Tatian, and that of Valentine, was far from being either trifling or inconsiderable. Matter, for instance, being considered by the former as intrinsically evil, and the bodies of men consequently as not having been framed by the Deity, but as so many prisons of celestial souls, he willed his followers to abstain from propagating their species, and likewise from every thing that might conduce either to the strengthening or recreation of their corporeal fabric: in other words he commanded his disciples to avoid wedlock, to forego the use of animal food, as well as of wine, and, leading a solitary life, to content themselves with a very moderate quantity of the most slight and meagre sustenance. To such an excess indeed were his regulations with regard to abstinence carried, that even in the celebration of the Lord's supper, he enjoined the use of water instead of wine [l].

This

[k] Vid. Clemens Alexand. *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 460, & *Excerpt. ex Philosoph. Orient.* p. 806, Epiphanius, *Hæres.* xlvi. cap. i. p. 391. Origen in *Lib. de Oratione* cap. xiii. p. 77. Edit. Oxon. Hieron. *Comm. in Galat.* vi. p. 200, &c.

[l] A dislike to wine should seem to have prevailed amongst the philosophers of the East from a very remote period, and more particularly amongst such of them as believed in a two-fold origina of things, by whom we find it commonly termed the blood of the Devil, or evil principle. See what has been collected on the subject by Paul Ernest Jablonsky, in his *Pantheon Ægyptiorum*, part i. p. 131. In prohibiting the use of wine therefore to his followers,

Mohammed

C E N T. II.
 Tatian. This severe and melancholy system of discipline procured for his followers, of whom Tatian had soon to boast of great numbers in Syria, the people of which country naturally lean to an austerity of manners, and subsequently in other regions, the denominations of *Encratites*, or “the Continent,” *Hydroparastates*, or “Water Drinkers,” *Apotactites*, or “Renunciants,” of this world’s goods, and the like; although it was by on means unusual for them to be termed, in reference to the author of their sect, *Tatianites*, or *Tatianists*. A species of piety that wears an austere and rigid aspect, being sure to make a considerable impression on the minds of people in general, it is not to be wondered at that this sect should have maintained its ground in various countries, so low down as the fourth century, or indeed even later [m].

The Ophites. LXII. That I should enter into a history of the smaller and more obscure of the Gnostic sects, of which a numerous catalogue might easily be collected from ancient writers, will not, I take it for granted, be thought necessary; for besides that nothing of any moment respecting them is to be met with on record, it should seem that ancient authors fell into the error of

Mohammed does not appear to have originated any new or difficult law, but merely revived and sanctioned with his authority an ancient regulation of the Arabs, the Persians, the Syrians, and other oriental nations. We may hence too, easily account for that detestation of wine by which almost all the Gnostics of Asiatic origin, and, at a subsequent period, the Manichæans were characterised.

[m] Vid. Jos. Simon. Affemanni, *Biblioth. Oriental. Clement. Vatican. tom. i. p. 93.* Affemann, who was himself a Syrian, and well acquainted with the temper and habits of his countrymen very justly remarks, that the naturally rigid and austere disposition of the Syrians tended greatly to favour the extension of this sect.

CON-

considering as separate and distinct sects, what were merely members or branches of other sects, to say nothing of the occasion that was afforded for the mistaken multiplication of sects, by the practice that appears to have prevailed of frequently giving to an individual sect a great variety of denominations [n]. I cannot, however,

C E N T.
II.
The Ophites.

[n] It would be very possible for any one who might feel so disposed, to collect from the works of ancient writers, a sufficiently extensive catalogue of Gnostic sects, that are represented as not coming within the description of any of those to which we have above adverted. Mention in particular is made of the followers of *Cassian*, the *Docetes*, the *Severians*, the *Apostolics*, the *Adamites*, who are said to have aimed at reviving the manners by which mankind were characterized in a state of primitive innocence; the *Cainites*, who are reported to have held in reverence Cain, Corah, Dathan, the inhabitants of Sodom, and Judas Iscariot; the *Abelites*, who are represented as having allowed of marriage, but at the same time discountenanced the procreation of children; the *Sethians*, who regarded Seth as the Christ; the *Florinians*, a sect that owed its origin to Florinus and Blaſtus, two Valentiniſians, who had their residence at Rome, and various others of different denominations. Of any thing that remains on record, however, respecting these sects, it would be but a waste of time to take notice, inasmuch as their history is in part very obscure, in part devoid of every thing like certainty, and in part utterly unworthy of being related. Besides, it is incredible that the Gnostic tribe could ever have been split into such a multitude of sects and factions, although it is not to be denied but that its tenets were well calculated to give rise to a great diversity of opinions. It is my belief therefore, that the variety of names by which it was not uncommon for an individual sect to be distinguished, one, perhaps, having a reference to some distinguishing tenet, another to its founder, another to some particular place or the like, occasionally led people into the error of imagining that there existed so many separate and distinct sects. The error, for instance, that is ascribed to the Docetes, respecting the body of Christ, was not properly the error of one sect, but was common to a great portion of the Gnostic tribe, and I therefore have no doubt, but that those who were termed Docetes by some,

C E N T.
 II.
 The Ophites.

ever, omit taking notice of the *Ophites*, a sorry, infatuated set of men, on whose tenets Irenæus and other ancient writers have bestowed a much greater degree of attention than on those of many other sects. With regard to the first rise of this sect, there are various considerations which will not permit us to doubt of its having had its origin amongst the Jews, or of its having existed long prior to the age of Christ. Struck with the magnitude and splendour of our blessed Saviour's miracles, a part of the *Ophites* were induced to acknowledge his divine authority, reserving to themselves nevertheless the liberty of making the religion which he promulgated conform itself to certain principles which they had previously adopted from the Egyptian and oriental philosophy. The remainder of the sect, however, continued to cherish their ancient superstitions, and execrated the name of Christ in common with other Jews. Hence arose two descriptions of the *Ophites*, the one Jewish, the other Christian. The tenets of the latter embraced most of those vain fancies which were cherished

some, had a different denomination given to them by others : whence it happened that what was merely one individual sect, was regarded by uninformed people as two. The sect of the *Ophites*, or *Serpentinians*, was founded by one Euphrates ; in all probability therefore, although they were styled by some *Ophites*, yet others gave them the title of *Euphratices*, and those who were ignorant of this might consider the latter as a distinct sect from the former. By Epiphanius and others, the *Gnostics* are represented as an individual sect, distinct from the *Valentinians*, the *Carpocratians*, the *Basilidians*, and the rest : and yet it is notorious at this day, that all these latter arrogated to themselves the title of *Gnostics*, as a badge of superior wisdom. I intentionally pass over some other things that might be noticed as opposed to our believing the heretical sects to have been so numerous as ancient authors represent.

by

by the other Gnostics of Egyptian origin, respecting the Æons; the eternity of matter, the creation of the world without the approbation or knowledge of the supreme Deity, the imprisonment, as it were of souls within the body, the directors or rulers of the seven planets, or wandering stars; the tyranny exercised by Demiurgus, whom they termed *Jaldaboth*, and his associates, over celestial minds; the progress of souls ascending to the Deity through the seven celestial orbs, and the means which *Sophia*, or *Achamoth* had in contemplation for delivering them from the power of Demiurgus; they also held that Christ had descended from above, and joined himself to the most just and holy man, Jesus, for the purpose of overthrowing the dominion of the architect of this world, but that upon the seizure of Jesus by the Jews, Christ withdrew himself and returned to his station in the celestial regions. The difference therefore between these Ophites and the other Gnostics of Egyptian origin as to things of any material moment was but small. They had, however, one tenet peculiar to themselves, and to which they owed the appellation of Ophites, namely, that the serpent by whom our first parents were beguiled was not an enemy but a friend to the human race, and that it was either Christ himself or Sophia, who under the disguise of a serpent's form wished to overthrow the councils of the architect of this world, or Jaldaboth, and to accomplish the salvation of mankind. Under the influence of this strange persuasion they are said to have nourished a number of living serpents, and paid them a sort of honorary worship [*o*].

LXIII. Nearly

(*o*) For a more particular discussion of the history and tenets

C E N T.

II.

Cerdo and
Marcion.

LXIII. Nearly about the same time that the Roman church was infested by the depraved opinions of Valentine, its tranquillity was further disturbed by the dissemination within its bosom of another system of heretical discipline, that owed its origin to one Cerdo, a native of Syria, a system which, if we can depend on ancient authors for having given it to us entire, was certainly shorter, more simple, and consequently easier to be understood, than that of Valentine, but built upon the same principles, and teeming with similar depravities [p.] With Cerdo was associated.

tenets of this sect, as far as they are at present to be collected from ancient writers, the reader is referred to a German work of mine, written expressly on the subject, and printed at Helmsstadt 1746, in quarto.

[p] Respecting this Cerdo, whom almost all ancient writers concur in representing as the preceptor of Marcion, but who, with greater propriety perhaps, might have been termed by them Marcion's friend and associate, but very little is to be met with on record. We know, indeed, that he was by birth a Syrian, and that he lived and taught at Rome about the middle of this century; but as to every thing else respecting him, we are left altogether in the dark, or in a state of the greatest uncertainty. With regard to the life and fortunes of Marcion, not much more that can be relied on has been handed down to posterity. By most of the ancient writers however, the tenets of both have been either professedly or incidentally brought under review. In addition to what is to be met with on the subject in Irenæus, (who takes continual occasion for displaying his decided hostility to the principles of Marcion,) Epiphanius, Theodoret, and other heresiologists, we find most of the early fathers whose works have reached our times, adverting to various of the Marcionite tenets, for the purpose of expressing their detestation of them. Were we to be called upon for a reference to those writers from whom most information is to be obtained with regard to the discipline of Marcion, we should assign the first place to Tertullian, whose five books against this heresiarch we deem worthy of perusal, although written in a very tumid and embarrassed style,

affiliated Marcion, the son of a bishop of Pontus, a man of genius and learning, as well as of distinguished gravity and moderation, who had, at an earlier period, when he resided in Asia, manifested his dissent from the established tenets of the church, and thereby, as it should seem, rendered himself an object of public censure [q].

C E N T.

II.

Cerdo and
Marcion.

On

style, to say nothing of the poem against Marcion, extending likewise to five books, which is commonly attributed to Tertullian, and annexed to his works, although by many thought unworthy of his pen, and ascribed to some other author; and in the next place we should direct the reader to that dialogue against Marcion which is commonly, although, as some suppose, falsely attributed to Origen, and was published separately in Greek and Latin, by J. Rudolph Wetstein, Basil, 1674, 4to. From neither of these however, must the reader expect to obtain a regular and complete view of the system of Marcion in all its parts: what they give us is merely a sketch of its leading features, or rather an exhibition of such parts as are distinguished for their deformity, without any kind of order or connection. Of more modern writers, Isaac Beaufobre has bestowed great pains in developing the true principles and nature of the Marcionite discipline in his *Histoire de Manichee*, tom. ii. p. 69, & seq. although in a way that occasionally favours too much of his propensity to hunt after excuses and apologies for heretics. Of Tillemont, Massuet, and others, I say nothing: all these run into the opposite extreme, being too ready to give credit to every thing which ancient writers have left on record respecting Marcion and his preceptor.

[q] Epiphanius (*Heret.* xlii.) relates that Marcion was at first distinguished for the severity of his morals, and led a solitary life, but that becoming the victim of illicit passion, he seduced a young woman, and was in consequence thereof excommunicated by his father the bishop: that finding it impossible to obtain the forgiveness of his parent upon any terms, he fled to Rome, and endeavoured, by the most urgent solicitations, to prevail on the presbyters, by whom the Roman church was at that time governed, Hyginus being dead, to receive him into the communion of the faithful; but that these presbyters constantly declined complying with his request, on the ground that it was not permitted them

to

C E N T. On his arrival at Rome, Marcion appears for a
 II. while to have disguised his real sentiments with
 Cerdo and regard
 Marcion.

to do so without the consent of the bishop by whom he had been excommunicated, (and in this particular, certainly, the statement is perfectly in unison with what we know to have been the ancient discipline; for in primitive times it was an invariable rule, that no one who had been expelled from communion with the faithful should be again received into the bosom of the church without the knowledge and consent of the bishop by whom he had been excommunicated,) and that Marcion therefore, inflamed with indignation, associated himself with Cerdo, who was at that time busied in disseminating his erroneous doctrines at Rome. With the exception of Beausobre, implicit credit has been given to this by almost every writer subsequent to Epiphanius; and the statement, considered merely in itself, has certainly nothing at all incredible in it. There are certain circumstances, however, which, when they come to be taken into the account, will not permit us to regard the matter as placed altogether beyond the reach of controversy. In the first place, all the ancient writers who treat of the history and opinions of Marcion, appear to have been quite uninformed as to what is thus related by Epiphanius, except the uncertain author of the Appendix to Tertullian's book *de Prescriptionibus adversus Hæreticos*; and the authority of Epiphanius is certainly, as every one knows, not of such weight as that his testimony singly should be allowed to overbalance the silence of every other ancient writer. And in the next place it is worthy of remark, as has been observed by several of the learned, that Marcion during his residence in Asia, before ever he had visited Rome, appears to have given disturbance to the church by his tenets; (Vid. Dion. Petavins *Not. ad Epiphan. Hæres.* xxii. Jos. Sim. Asseman, *Biblioth. Oriental.* Clement. Vatican. tom. i. p. 389. Jo. Pearson, *Vindic. Ignatian.* p. ii. cap. viii. p. 372. Anton. Pagi *Critica in Baronium*, tom. i. ad ann. 144. sect. 3.) which renders it extremely probable that the true reason of his being excommunicated by his father was not his illicit amours, but his heretical doctrines. And in my opinion it would be no very unhappy conjecture were it to be suggested that the meaning of Epiphanius had been misapprehended, a literal interpretation having inadvertently been given to what this author had never intended to have been received in any other than a figurative sense, and that by the virgin

regard to religion, under the hope of being able to obtain for himself some situation of dignity in the church; but having, in an unguarded moment, been led to disclose so much of the nature of his tenets as effectually to cut himself off from every expectation of this kind, (for he was so imprudent as in familiar conversation with some of the Roman presbyters to speak contemptuously of the books of the Old Testament, and the God of the Hebrews,) he at once threw off the mask, and openly associating himself with Cerdo, devoted the remainder of his days to the establishment of a new sect in Italy, and various other provinces through which he travelled [r]. So eminently successful was he in the accomplishment of this object, that he left behind him a most

virgin whom Marcion is represented as having seduced, we ought to understand merely the Church, whose purity he had sullied by the dissemination of unsound opinions. The ancient fathers were, it is well known, very frequently wont to compare the church to a virgin, and to treat the institution of a new sect as a violation of maiden purity. It is also by no means impossible, that the transgression of which it appears from Tertullian (*de Præscript.* cap. xxx.) and others, that Apelles, the disciple of Marcion was guilty, might mistakenly have been imputed to his master.

[r] According to Epiphanius, Marcion enquired of the Roman presbyters in what sense we ought to understand what is said by our blessed Saviour in Luke v. 36. of not putting new wine into old bottles, or sewing an old piece upon a new garment. The presbyters appear to have explained the meaning of Christ's words as well as they were able, but I am bound to confess, in a way that does them but little credit, either on the score of learning or penetration. Dissatisfied with their answer, Marcion is represented as having avowed his belief, that by those words it was Christ's intention to intimate, that the books of the Old Testament were superseded by his authority, and that those of the New Testament were not to be considered as having any connection with them.

C E N T. ^{II} numerous tribe of followers in almost every region of the earth, who, in spite of every effort that was made to subdue them, continued to maintain their ground down to the fifth, nay, even to the sixth century [s]. Of his disciples, Lucan or Lucian, Severus, Blaſtes, and others, but more particularly Apelles, are ſaid, in ſome reſpects, to have corrected the errors of their maſter, in others, to have aggravated them, and to have become the authors of various new ſects; but the accounts given of them by different writers poſſeſs but little conſiſtency, and ſeem not at all calculated to ſtand the teſt of ſevere examination.

The ſyſtem
of Marcion.

LXIV. Ancient writers vary conſiderably in their expoſition of the diſcipline of Marcion. Their diſagreement, however, is not ſo great as to prevent us from aſcertaining, in a general way, what were his ſentiments reſpecting the origin of all things, and the nature of Jeſus Chriſt, whom he conſidered as having come into the world for the purpoſe of ſaving ſouls. In the firſt place, he, after the example of the oriental

[s] Tertullian in his *Præſcript. adv. Heret.* cap. xxx. p. 242. ſays that Marcion was twice excommunicated from the Roman church, and that it was intended to have yielded to his intreaties, and received him back again even the third time, provided he would undeceive thoſe whom he had corrupted with his errors, and bring them back with him into the boſom of the church, but that death overtook him before he could accompliſh this, and that he conſequently died excommunicate. Irenæus has recorded much the ſame thing of Cerdo; and learned men have therefore been led to conclude, that Tertullian has in this inſtance fallen into an error, and imputed that to Marcion which properly belonged to Cerdo. Vid. Tillemont *Memoires pour ſervir a l'Hiſtoire de l'Egliſe*, tom. ii. p. ii. p. 514. & ſeq. The thing is certainly not of ſuch moment as to countenance us in devoting any time to its inveſtigation.

philophers,

philosophers, figured to himself two primary principles, from whence all things had proceeded, the one devoid of every thing evil, the other destitute of every kind of good; the former the Prince of Light, the latter the lord or governor of matter and darkness. Of these two deities, the best and most powerful, not only begat of himself a number of immortal and immutable natures of different orders and degrees, but also laid the foundations of the superior or celestial world in which the stars hold their course. The Creator of this nether world and its inhabitants, he represented as holding a middle station, between those two primary beings, considering him as an angel of divine origin, endowed with the most extensive powers, who had formed this visible universe and the human race out of corrupt and shapeless matter, against the consent of its prince or ruler, mingling however therewith a considerable portion of celestial or æthereal matter, and uniting with the vitiated and mortal body, a soul divine in its origin and endowed with rationality [t]. This founder of the world was,

C E N T.
II.
The system
of Marcion.

[t] None of the ancient writers furnish us with a complete view of the system of Marcion. Its external form may in some sort be collected from them, but as to its interior arrangement we are left wholly in the dark. Upon comparing together early authorities, we, in spite of their great disagreement with each other, are pretty well able to ascertain what were its leading features, but as to any of its minor parts, or the way in which the whole might be knit together, we have nothing to guide us beyond conjecture. Conjecture, however, may in this case be exercised with greater confidence than in some others, since the religion of Marcion bears a very strong resemblance to the discipline of the Manichees, with regard to which we possess much fuller information. Marcion no doubt was provided with a long story respecting the origin of this visible world, of a similar nature to that with which Manes furnished

CENT.

II.

The system
of Marcion.

was, according to Marcion, that Being whom the Jews worshipped as the Supreme Deity; the same that commissioned Moses, and gave to the Hebrew nation through him a law, a law not indeed positively evil, but imperfect, and suited to men who were ignorant of the Supreme Deity, and paid greater obedience to their own sensual appetites and inclinations, than to the dictates of right reason. Between this parent of the material world, and the two above-mentioned eternal principles of all things, the chief point of difference appears to have been that the former was looked upon as being neither positively good, nor yet as absolutely evil; but of a nature partaking of both, or as Marcion expressed it, he was *just* [u].
For

nished his followers; but ancient writers give us merely a summary of it, and content themselves with stating him to have maintained that the world was framed of evil matter by an angel of the first order, whom, by way of distinction, he denominated the Deity, or god of the world. As the Marcionites, however, did not pretend to deny but that there were many things good in this visible world, which could not have been derived from the kingdom of the evil principle, and since they moreover admitted that mankind were possessed of a divine soul, a soul bearing an affinity to the supreme Deity, we are of necessity constrained to regard them as believing like the Manicheans, that a portion of celestial matter had been mingled with that which was naturally evil, and the bodies of men endowed with heavenly souls derived from the habitation of the supreme Being. This much I have thought fit to add by way of supplement to what is to be met with in ancient authors. At present I see no occasion for farther remark.

[u] There can be no doubt but that the many ancient as well as modern writers, who represent Marcion as having taught that the founder of the world was by nature evil, have been guilty of an error. Origen, Tertullian, and numerous other authorities might be cited in proof of his having considered the architect of this universe, as a being entirely distinct from both the good and the evil deity. The
Supreme

For by means of punishments and calamities which the good Deity was from his nature incapable of inflicting, this middle Being took vengeance on all those who neglected his laws, whilst on the other hand, he, with blessings and rewards, which it was not in the nature of the evil Deity to confer, remunerated those who acted uprightly, and led a life agreeable to his commandments. Between him and the Lord or Governor of matter, there was perpetual war. For since, in the creation of the world, and the replenishing of it with inhabitants, he had invaded the province of this Prince of darkness, the latter, out of revenge, set himself to work with every possible degree of care and diligence to seduce mankind from their allegiance to their maker, and bring them into subjection to himself.

C E N T.
II.

The system
of Marcion.

Supreme God, the Lord and governor of light, he regarded as in the strictest sense good, so as to be absolutely incapable of harbouring an evil thought or intention; nay, so infinitely benevolent as not to be able to punish, even his enemies. The prince, or ruler of darkness and matter, he believed to be positively evil, an utter stranger to every sort of good, and destitute of the power of blessing, even his friends. The founder of the world, he esteemed as neither good nor evil, but as being what he termed *just*, that is, being invested with the power of either blessing or chastising, he consigned his enemies over to punishment, and remunerated his friends. Origen *Dial. contra Marcionit.* p. 48. edit. Westen. ἡ ἐν μεσῇ ἀρχῇ ὑπῆκόεσσι τῷ ἀγαθῷ ἄνεσσι διδῶσῃ, ὑπῆκόεσσι δὲ τῷ πονήρῳ θλίβειν διδῶσι. *Medium principium* (i. e. the founder of the world whom he considered as holding a middle station between the good and the evil deity) *quietem præbet illis qui obediunt bono, pœnas autem infligit illis qui parent malo principio.* To which may be added what is said by Clement of Alexandria, *Stromat.* lib. iii. p. 425. — Οἱ ἀπὸ Μαρκιῶνος φύσιν κακῆν . . . ἐκ διαίτης γενομένην δημιούργει. *Marcionis sectatores dicunt naturam rerum factam esse a conditore seu Demiurgo qui justus est.* More as to this will be found in Beaufobre's *Histoire de Manichee*, vol. ii. p. 89, et seq.

CENT.

II.

Those souls who suffered themselves to be led astray by the counsels of this deceiver, and paid obedience to his mandates, would, according to Marcion, on the dissolution of the body, be sent by the God of the Jews, the founder and legislator of the world, into a place of woe, where they would suffer inexpressible torments; whilst those who in spite of every artifice remained steady in their allegiance to their Creator, would, after death, be transferred into the regions of unbounded felicity and joy [v].

The tenets
of Marcion
respecting
Christ.

LXV. With a view to put an end to this war of the evil principle with the founder of the world, and at the same time to recal the souls that lay imprisoned within material bodies, back to their true origin, the supreme and all-benevolent Deity, according to this heresiarch, sent down to the Jews a most excellent nature, nearly resembling himself, namely, his son Je-

[v] I have above expressed myself nearly in the words of the ancient writers. I will now endeavour in the way of explanation to supply what not only they, but more recent authors have omitted. The Creator of the world was, according to Marcion, the same with the God and legislator of the Jews. They therefore who obeyed him were Jews either by birth or conversion, and observed the law of Moses. His adversaries were the Gentiles, who, rejecting the God of the Jews, paid their adoration to a multitude of false deities. For the Gods whom the heathens worshipped, Marcion, like most of the ancient Christian teachers, regarded as wicked angels or ministers of the evil principle, the lord or governor of darkness. Whoever then paid divine honours to these, he of course regarded as the subjects of the evil principle, the ruler of matter. In short, the sum of what Marcion wished to inculcate appears to have been this, that the Jews exclusively would be saved, inasmuch as they continued steadfast in their obedience to the founder of the world, but that perdition would be the lot of all the heathen nations, in consequence of their yielding themselves servants to the evil deity.

fus

fus Christ, investing him with no sort of body
 or material cloathing, but merely with such a
 semblance or likeness of a body as might render
 him visible to human eyes [w]. The son, with
 a view to obtain for himself a more ready atten-
 tion from the people to whom he was thus com-
 missioned, pretended that he was the Christ of
 whom their ancient prophets had sung, and de-
 monstrated the truth of his legation by a variety
 of miraculous acts [x]. With respect to the na-
 ture

C E N T.
II.

The tenets
of Marcion
respecting
Christ.

[w] Ancient writers are far from being either consistent or perspicuous in their exposition of the tenets of Marcion respecting the Son of God. Such particulars relating to this subject as are expressly handed down to us by the majority of those fathers who in point of weight and antiquity are best entitled to credit, or which may fairly be deduced from their writings in the way of inference, the reader will find given above. From these it is perfectly clear that Marcion would not allow that the Saviour of the world was clothed with a real body, or took upon him our nature : but whether he believed him to have been invested with merely the shadow or resemblance of a body, or with a body composed of refined ethereal matter, appears to admit of some doubt. Each of these opinions has its abettors. Another point that may be said to admit of being contested, with little advantage in point of argument on either side, is, whether Marcion believed the Son of God to have made his appearance amongst the Jews on a sudden, under the form or likeness of a perfect man, or conceived him to have been apparently born of a virgin, in like manner as he believed him in appearance, and according to the opinion of mankind, to have died ?

[x] Marcion was ready to admit that the ancient Jewish prophets, whose writings are comprized in the code of the Old Testament, had held forth the promise of a Messiah or deliverer to the Hebrew nation : nor did he pretend to doubt, as is manifest from a passage of Tertullian which we shall presently bring forward, but that this Messiah would, at some time or other, actually make his appearance, and in a certain degree restore the fallen fortunes of the house of Israel. But he positively denied that our blessed Saviour was such Messiah : and indeed, according

C E N T. II. ture of Christ's functions, Marcion held, that he, in the first place, had it in command to revive amongst

The tenets of Marcion respecting Christ.

to his tenets, it was impossible for him to act otherwise. For since it was his belief that the God whom the Jews worshipped was merely the founder of this world, and not the supreme or superlatively excellent Deity, it could not but follow that he should have regarded the ancient Jewish prophets as the legates merely of this creator of the universe, and not of the Supreme Being, and likewise have conceived that the Messiah, whose advent they predicted, would not be one and the same with the Son of the Most High, whom he believed to have made his appearance in Jesus with a view to the salvation of men's souls. For it was not to be imagined that the Lord of everlasting light, or the Supreme Deity would commission the servants of the architect of this world, a being so vastly inferior to himself, to announce the advent of his son. It however militated in no trifling degree against this opinion, that the Son of God actually professed himself to be that Christ or Messiah whose coming had been predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament. For notwithstanding that Marcion had a proper gospel of his own, differing considerably from ours, and maintained that such particulars in the history of Christ as were in opposition to his tenets ought to be rejected as spurious interpolations, he had not the hardihood to call in question such a glaring fact as that of our blessed Saviour's having, throughout the whole course of his ministry amongst the Jews, maintained that he was that Messiah whom their prophets had taught them to expect. By way of removing this obstacle therefore, Marcion asserted that our Saviour had in this instance practised a deception on the Jews, and falsely personated their promised Messiah by way of obtaining from them a more favourable reception and hearing. *Constituit Marcion, says Tertullian, (contr. Marc. lib.iii. cap. xv.) alium esse Christum qui Tiberianis temporibus a Deo quondam ignoto (i. e. the good principle) revelatus sit in salutem omnium Gentium, alium qui a Deo creatore (i. e. the God of the Jews, whom he termed Just) in restitutionem Judaici status sit destinatus quandeque venturus. - - - sed quomodo inquit (Marcion) irreperet (Jesus or the Son of God) in Judæorum fidem, nisi per solemne apud eos et familiare nomen (namely that of Christ).* Now one who could believe that the Son of God himself had recourse to fraud and lying for the purpose of insinuating himself with the Jews, must necessarily have conceived

C E N T.
II.

The tenets
of Marcion
respecting
Christ.

amongst mankind the knowledge and worship of the supreme and only true God, and to overthrow, not only the kingdom of the Prince of Darkness, which had its foundation in, and was upheld by superstition, but also the government and dominion of the founder of this world, or the God of the Jews: and in the next place, he was to supply the souls endowed with reason, with instruction as to the means whereby they might cleanse themselves from the contagion of the body and of matter, and render themselves worthy of attaining to everlasting felicity in the realms of light. Such being the objects of his mission, he was at once assailed with the united strength of the Prince of Darkness and the founder of this world. The latter in particular, perceiving that no respect whatever was paid by Jesus to his law, and that his subjects were incited to sedition, procured him to be apprehended by his servants, and condemned to undergo the punishment of death, not being in the least aware that the person with whom he had to deal was the son of the supreme Deity. His expectations, however, were completely disappointed: for as Jesus was not invested with a real body, it was impossible that he could be subjected to punishment, or die. Christ, however, permitted his imaginary body to be apparently punished and deprived of life, by way of impressing on the minds of mortals, that the vile and corrupt body wherewith they are clothed,

ceived that every species of fallacy was allowable which might contribute towards advancing the truth, and I am therefore induced to think, that ancient writers are deserving of credit in what they state as to Marcion's having vitiated, mutilated, and in divers respects altered, the books of the New Testament.

ought

C E N T.

II.

The tenets
of Marcion
respecting
Christ.

ought to be deemed unworthy of the least consideration by a wise and religious man [y]. Having executed his commission here on earth, the Son of God, according to Marcion, descended into the infernal regions, and set at liberty all those souls whom the Founder of the world had there condemned to the flames, in consequence of their having manifested a contempt for his law [z].

The

[y] What I here state respecting the motive for Christ's undergoing a feigned death is merely a conjecture of my own. Marcion indisputably denied that Christ in reality either suffered or died; but, at the same time, he affirmed that his imaginary or apparent death was attended with salutary consequences to the human race. For we find Megethus, a Marcionite, represented by Origen, *Dial. contr. Marcion. sect. ii. p. 53.* as thus speaking: ὁ δημιουργὸς ἰδὼν τὸν ἀγαθὸν λυοῦντα αὐτῆ τὸν νόμον ἐπιβέβλευσεν αὐτῆ, μὴ εἰδὼς, ὅτι ὁ θάνατος τῆ ἀγαθῆ σωτηρία ἀνθρώπων ἐγίνετο. *Conditor* (i. e. the Founder of the world, or God of the Jews) *ubi animadvertit bonum illum* (i. e. Jesus, the Son of the good Deity) *legem suam* (viz. the law of Moses) *violare, struxit ei insidias, nescius boni hujus* (i. e. Jesus) *mortem hominum salutem esse.* Now, to me, it appears quite impossible to divine any other kind of salutary consequences that could be derived by the human race from the feigned death of Jesus than what I have above pointed out. Jesus Christ, by apparently giving himself over to death, meant to impress on mankind that neither the body nor the dissolution of the body deserved a moment's concern, and that, for the sake of the soul, even violent hands might be laid on the body, inasmuch as it was a mere machine, composed of depraved matter, the very fæces, as it were, of the malignant Deity. Hence all the Marcionites, as we find recorded by the whole body of ancient fathers, so far from fearing, or seeking to avoid death, were anxious to encounter it, nor were they ever surpassed by any other sect either in the number or the courage of their martyrs.

[z] Marcion held that Jesus, after having executed the commission with which he was charged to mankind, descended to the infernal regions, and brought up with him from thence the souls of all the sinners of whom mention is made in the books of the Old Testament, such as Cain, the Sodomites,

The rule of life prescribed by Marcion to his followers is acknowledged, even by his adversaries, to have been severe in the extreme. Impressed with the belief that the soul was constantly in the greatest danger of being enervated and corrupted through the influence of the material body by which it was enveloped, he particularly inculcated the necessity of bringing the latter into subjection, and recommended to his followers to avoid marriage. He also willed them to spurn the delights of sense, and content themselves with diet of a meagre, attenuating nature, such as bread, water, herbs, pulse, and fish [a].

C E N T.
II.

The tenets
of Marcion
respecting
Christ.

LXVI. The

Sodomites, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, whilst he left behind him the souls of all the just, such as Abel, Noah, and Abraham. See Irenæus, lib. i. cap. 29., Epiphanius, and others. Many, it is true, would have this to be a mere story invented by his enemies; but they labour under an error. From the very nature of Marcion's discipline it was impossible that he should have believed otherwise. According to him the sinners recorded in the writings of the Old Testament had not incurred the displeasure of the Supreme Deity, but offended merely the Founder of this world, or the God of the Jews. Christ, therefore, having come into the world for the express purpose of putting an end to the dominion of this latter being, it was but just that he should set at liberty those who were suffering punishment for their disobedience to his laws. On the other hand, it was his opinion that the saints of the Old Testament had never made it their study to please the Supreme Deity, but merely the architect of this world; wherefore there could be no reason whatever for Christ's having any thing to do with them. Besides these latter were not in a state of suffering or unhappiness, but were receiving the reward of their obedience to the Parent of the world and his commandments.

[a] That Marcion prescribed to his followers a rigid and austere course of life, and that it was the practice of his disciples therefore to reject every kind of worldly gratification, and pass their lives in a state of continence, penury, and bodily affliction, so as to render the arrival of their

C E N T.
II.The heresy
of Mon-
tanus.LXVI. The various commotions which thus arose out of the endeavour to bring about an
acco-

their last hour an object of desire rather than of fear, is admitted by all the ancient Christian writers. I think it right, however, in this place, to repeat an observation that I have already made above, namely, that the accounts which are handed down to us by ancient authors, of the rigid and severe system of moral discipline by which certain of the Gnostic and other sects were characterized, are not to be understood as applying indiscriminately to all the individuals of which such sects were composed, but in an especial manner to the priests and such select disciples as might be ambitious of attaining to a more than ordinary degree of sanctity. For the founders of these sects were naturally anxious for their increase and propagation; and being fully aware that the rigid course of moral discipline which they prescribed must, if generally adopted, tend in great measure to defeat this object, took care so to temper their injunctions as that the multitude should be at liberty to live after the manner of other people, the more rigid precepts having a reference merely to the public instructors and such as were more than ordinarily studious of securing their own salvation. To conclude: It cannot fail to be readily perceived by every one who shall investigate, with attention, the account here given of the sects that are usually classed under the general title of Gnostics, that the chief point of difference between them rested in this, that some of them recognized the ancient oriental dogma respecting the existence of two principles in its full extent, whilst others abridged it somewhat, and supplied the place of what they thus cut off with visionary fancies drawn from other quarters. In the following respects they appear to have been all of one mind, namely,—that in addition to the Deity, matter, the root and cause of every thing evil and depraved, had existed from all eternity;—that this corrupt matter had not been reduced into order by the Supreme and all-benevolent Deity, but by a nature of a far inferior rank;—that the founder of the world, therefore, and the Deity, were beings between whom no sort of relationship whatever existed;—that the bodies of mankind owed their formation to the founder of the world, but that their souls were the offspring of the Deity;—that the former, therefore, would return to matter without the least hope of revivification, whilst the latter, provided they threw off

accomodation between the oriental philosophy and the Christian religion, although in themselves sufficiently afflictive, may be said to have prevailed rather without the confines of the church, and to have interfered but little with its internal state. By far more baneful and pernicious in their consequences to the welfare of the Christian cause were those disagreements and dissensions which not long after sprung up within the very bosom of the church itself, and amongst Christians who in respect to the sum and substance of religion were entirely agreed. Of this species of dissensions the first entitled to notice is that which Montanus, under the reign of Marcus Aurelius, about the middle of this century, originated at Pepuza, an obscure, insignificant little village in Phrygia [b]. This herefiarch, a man of

off the yoke of the founder of this world, would ascend to the Deity, or at least to that region which lies immediately contiguous to the habitation of the Deity. Those, moreover, who were natives of Syria and Asia assigned to matter a peculiar prince or governor whom they believed to have been self-existent, or to have sprung from matter itself; in other words, they believed in the existence of an evil principle as well as a good one. This prince of matter, however, they considered as a distinct being from the founder of the world. To those of the Gnostics who had been bred up in Egypt, such as Basilides, Valentine, and others, this prince or governor of matter was entirely unknown; but they in their turn encumbered the oriental doctrine with various whimsical conceits, of Egyptian origin, respecting the heavens, the stars, the descent and ascent of souls, the princes or rulers of the wandering stars, the eternal forms of all things existing in the Pleroma, as well as several other matters to which the Asiatics seem not altogether to have yielded their assent.

[b] Respecting the tenets of Montanus and his followers we are supplied with sufficient information, as well by the extracts, from certain books no longer in existence, which are given us by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. v. c. 16.

C E N T.

II.

The heresy
of Mon-
tanus.

of low origin, and, as it should seem, not naturally inclined to evil, but of a melancholic disposition

c. 16. et seq. as, from what is left on record by other historians of ancient sects, and more particularly Tertullian, who has devoted a series of books to the defence of the Montanists and their tenets. My opinion, however, is, that in as far as it relates to this sect, the testimony of this latter writer is not to be received without caution; for to pass over the fact, that we are quite in a state of uncertainty as to which of his books were written prior to his becoming a Montanist and which after, I am altogether deceived if he does not frequently, as is the general practice of advocates, give a certain sort of colouring to the doctrines of his master, and exhibit rather what he wished Montanus to have maintained, than what Montanus actually did maintain. Abundantly supplied, however, as we are with information as to the tenets and opinions of Montanus, there is a certain degree of confusion and obscurity which rests over the history of this heresiarch and his followers, nor can it, in the absence of all authentic memorials, be readily reduced into any kind of order. Learned men have disputed, and seem likely, to the end of time, to maintain disputes as to the exact period of the rise of this faction in Phrygia. Above I have followed the conjecture that appears to be supported, and not without reason, by the major part of those who have turned their attention to the subject. It is, however, far from being approved of by all. Jo. Phil. Baratier in his book *de Successione Romanor. Pontificum*, p. 135 & seq. contends, at much length, that we ought to refer the rise of this sect to the year cxxvi. The Abbè de Longuerue, whose dissertation *de Tempore quo Montani Hæresis nata est*, is to be found in Winkler's *Sylloge Anecdotorum*, p. 254, endeavours to prove that it sprang up under the reign of Antoninus Pius about the year cxi. J. Le Clerc, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica duor. prim. sæculor.* p. 676. places its origin under the year clvii. The calculations of other writers have produced different results; but between these the discordance has not been less, so that in spite of every endeavour to reconcile them recourse must necessarily be had to conjecture at last. Amongst more recent writers I have not met with one who has not either condemned or vindicated Montanus to an excess. Those who represent him as an execrable mortal; a compound of deception, vice, and every species of iniquity; a wretch imbued with the vilest

disposition and infirm judgment, in consequence of some morbid affection of the mind, became so disordered in his imagination as to conceive that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete or Comforter, by

C E N T.
II.
The heresy
of Mon-
tanus.

vilest notions respecting religion, a very bond-servant to the devil, and terminate their inveſtive by ſtating him and Maximilla to have been guilty of ſelf-murder, may certainly urge the authority of ancient writers on their ſide ; but then they are ſuch writers as are little to be depended upon, and this account of Montanus may therefore well be conſidered as in no ſlight degree overcharged. On the other hand, thoſe who hold him up as a pattern of ſanctity and virtue, a man divinely inſpired, and enduring perſecution for righteouſneſs ſake ; one who, with the exception of a few trifling errors, the aberrations of an ingenuous mind, had nothing whatever to be deſired in him ; who, in ſhort, would have us believe that the ancient Chriſtians, by whom Montanus was excommunicated, were, as to every thing eſſential, of the ſame way of thinking with himſelf, and, in the ſeverities which they exerciſed towards him, were influenced entirely by prejudice and paſſion, moſt aſſuredly carry their vindication of him to an extent which the truth will not juſtify. That Montanus was not actuated by a wicked mind, but was an ignorant ſimple man but little acquainted with the genuine principles of religion and piety, and that a certain degree of mental imbecility, conjoined with a melancholic diſpoſition, at length drove him out of his ſenſes, is what I feel no difficulty in believing ; but that he was a martyr to his ſanctity, and attempted nothing amiſs, or that he was not out of his wits, are points to which I am certain it will never be in my power to yield my aſſent. Great ingenuity and no leſs eloquence have been lately diſplayed in an attempt to diſpel the obſcurity that envelopes the tenets of Montanus by Theophilus Wernsdorf, a man diſtinguiſhed for his learning, and eminently ſkilled in matters of antiquity, whoſe *Commentatio de Montaniſtis ſæculi II. vulgo creditis Hæreticis*, published at Dantzic, 1751, 4to. reached me while I was engaged on this note. He is the advocate of Montanus, and maintains that the ancient Chriſtians could have had but little if any cauſe for condemning him. The difference in opinion between us is not ſo great as to prevent me from acknowledging that this learned writer has handſomely executed the taſk which he undertook.

C E N T.

II.

The heresy
of Mon-
tanus.

whom the apostles of our blessed Saviour had been animated, had, by divine appointment, descended upon him for the purpose of fortelling things of the greatest moment that were about to happen, and promulgating a better and more perfect discipline of life and morals than that which had been built upon the apostolic mandates [c]. Teeming, therefore, with this fancied inspiration,

[c] The ancient writers, whom the greater part of the more recent ones implicitly follow, represent Montanus as having so egregiously violated common sense as to maintain that he was actually the Paraclete, or Holy Ghost itself. But I strongly suspect that, in this instance, the words of these authors do not put us exactly in possession of their real sentiments, which, no doubt, were correct. None of them, unless I am altogether deceived, could have meant to say that Montanus conceived himself to be the very person of the Paraclete, or that his body was animated by the Holy Spirit in the place of a soul; for to have believed this he must have been inconsistent with himself, and the most silly of all mortals. These writers then could only have meant that Montanus endeavoured to persuade people that the Paraclete spake through him, and that the prophecies which he uttered were not of his own conception, but dictated by the Paraclete; and in this they were perfectly correct, for such was certainly his doctrine. The ambiguity and indistinctness with which both ancient and modern writers have expressed themselves on this subject is to be ascribed solely to the obscurity of Tertullian, who very frequently terms Montanus *The Paraclete*, and whose words and manner of expression these authors were led to make their own. What I have said of the man's labouring under some morbid affection of the mind stands in need, I think, of no justification; for since the innocence and austerity of his life absolves him from every suspicion of evil design, and the enormities that we find occasionally reported of him are undeserving of any sort of credit; since, moreover, the notion entertained by certain of the early Christian writers, that both his body and soul had been taken possession of by the devil, carries with it not the smallest semblance of truth, indeed is altogether contradicted by the very prophecies which he uttered, there remains, as it strikes me, no other

inspiration, and bursting through every kind of rational restraint, he poured forth a multitude of prophecies in which the Roman territory and government were threatened with calamities of the most grievous nature; and a severer rule of life and action was prescribed to mortals in the very words, as it was pretended, of the Deity himself. At the first he so far succeeded as to prevail on many to believe, that he was in reality the character which he wished to pass for, and to win over to his party, amongst several others of no mean rank, two opulent women named Priscilla and Maximilla, who with others of his disciples pretending like their master to the gift of prophecy, diffused his opinions within a short time throughout Asia, Africa, and some portion of Europe [d]. When people's minds however began in some degree to recover from the effect of this first impression, and these recently divulged prophecies came to be scrutinized with proper calmness and attention, the imposture became apparent, and the bishops of Asia, after discussing the subject in certain of their councils, adopted the resolution of expelling Montanus, together with his friends and associates, from every sort of connection with the faithful. The example thus set by the Asiatic prelates was gradually followed

C E N T.
II.The heresy
of Montanus.

other conclusion to which we can arrive than this, that he was a man disordered both in body and mind; unless, perhaps, some should be willing rather to suspect him of having practised a pious fraud.

[d] In addition to others distinguished for their virtue and sanctity it appears, that even the bishop of Rome, whom most writers suppose to have been Victor, was for a while induced to regard Montanus in the light of a prophet divinely inspired, and that it was Praxeas who awakened him from this delusion. Vid. Tillemont *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de l'Eglise*, tom. ii. p. iii. p. 124. & seq.

C E N T.
II.The heresy
of Montanus.

by the other Christian bishops, so that the excommunication of the Montanists became at length universal. Cut off therefore from all intercourse with the general body of Christians, these heretics formed themselves into a peculiar church, the chief president over which had his residence at Pepuza in Phrygia. This sect continued to flourish down to the fifth century, when it experienced some annoyance from imperial edicts: [e] and the list of its members was ennobled by not a few names distinguished both for learning and genius, amongst which none claims a higher rank, in point of celebrity, than that of Tertullian, a man of great eminence certainly, but beyond all measure rigid and austere, who in several books written by him expressly on the subject, advocates with considerable firmness and

[e] That the sect of the Montanists had not become extinct even so low down as the fifth century, is evident from the imperial edicts relating to it that are extant in the *Codex Theodosianus*, tom. vi. We there find the Montanists denounced by a law of Honorius, under the year 398. p. 168. as also by another severe edict of the same emperor, promulgated A. D. 407. (p. 177.) where they are termed Phrygians and Priscillianists, from Priscilla one of the female converts to Montanism, and associated with the Manichees. Under the following year 408. (p. 182.) we find the Priscillianists again denounced by a fresh edict; and two years after, viz. A. D. 410. (p. 186.) under the titles of Montanists and Priscillianists, they are still further proscribed by the emperor Theodosius the Younger. In the year 415, (p. 200.) another rigid law was enacted against the Montanists; and finally, in the year 423 (p. 202) we find them made the objects of a penal enactment under the titles of Phrygians and Pepuzites, which latter appellation they acquired from the little town in Phrygia, from whence the sect had originally sprung. The frequent repetition of laws like these, proves plainly that numerous branches of this sect were in existence even so late as the fifth century.

spirit

spirit the cause of the sect under whose banners he had been induced to enlist [*f*].

LXVII. With regard to the leading and generally-received notions of the Christians on the subject of religion, Montanus attempted no innovations of any moment [*g*]; nor were his moral precepts

C E N T.
II.

The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

[*f*] In embracing Montanism, Tertullian appears to have been less actuated by a cool and discriminating judgment than by self-love, or a wish to promote the growth of certain opinions to which he was immoderately attached. Most of the principles of moral discipline propounded by Montanus, so far from being either new or unheard of amongst the Christians, had been actually adopted by several of them before his time. Of this number was Tertullian, a man of a morose and saturnine disposition, to whom the moral discipline of the Christians in general had long appeared by far too indulgent and relaxed. Upon finding therefore that Montanus was an advocate for the principles which he considered as true and just, he at once, without ever seeing or hearing the man, pronounced that he must have been inspired of the Holy Ghost. The object of this good father's patronage was, in fact, not so much Montanus as himself and his own opinions.

[*g*] Neither Montanus nor his female disciples in their prophecies made any scruple of touching upon the principal dogmas of Christianity; nay, they occasionally avowed them, and entered the lists as their defenders against those who would have corrupted them. Tertullian in his book *de Resurrectione*, cap. lxiii. p. 429. represents Montanus and his male and female disciples, whom he designates by the titles of *Servi & Ancillæ Dei*, as having stood forth in defence of the doctrine of the Resurrection against the Gnostics, and also as having, *per novam prophetiam de Paraclete inundantem*, removed many of the difficulties with which not only this article of faith, but others were encumbered. *Cujus (prophetiæ,) he continues, si hauseris fontes, nullam poteris scire doctrinam, nullus te ardor exuret questionum, Resurrectionem quoque carnis usquequaque potando refrigerabis.* In the same book, cap. xi. p. 386, he adduces a fragment of one of the prophecies of Priscilla, in which she particularly reprehends those who opposed the doctrine of a future resurrection of the body. *Nemo tam carnaliter vivit quam qui negant carnis resurrectionem. . . .*

C E N T.
II.The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

precepts altogether new and unheard of, or of such a nature as to appear intolerable in the eyes of

De quibus luculenter & Paracletus per prophetidem Priscam : Carnes sunt & carnem oderunt. Disputing against Praxeas, Tertullian asserts that the Paraclete recognized three persons in the Godhead, and that he himself had been much assisted by the prophecies of the Paraclete in attaining to a right comprehension of this dogma. *Protulit* says he (in *Lib. contra Praxeam*, cap. xiii.) *Deus sermonem, quemadmodum etiam Paracletus (i. e. Montanus) docet, sicut radix fruticem, & fons fluvium, & fax radium.* And after some intermediate observations, he thus proceeds: *Nos qui & tempora & causas Scripturarum per Dei gratiam inspicimus, maxime Paracleti (the Holy Spirit speaking as he believed through Montanus) non hominum discipuli, duos quidem definimus, Patrem & Filium, & jam tres cum Spiritu Sancto . . . duos tamen Dominos & duos Deos numquam ex ore nostro proferimus.* It is plain therefore, that Montanus must have discussed some of the most weighty points of religion, and resolved them in a manner sufficiently subtle and refined. In handling these topics, however, he appears to have studiously avoided bringing forward any thing materially differing from the generally received opinions. St. Jerome, indeed, *Epist. xxxvii. ad Marcellam*, tom. iv. *Opp.* p. 64. edit. *Benedict.* accuses the Montanists of Sabellianism, *illi Sabellii dogma sectantes, Trinitatem in unius Personæ angustias cogunt.* But how little faith is to be placed in this accusation must be apparent from the words of Tertullian, above cited, in which he most expressly declares the Paraclete, as he terms Montanus, to have recognized three persons in the Godhead. If I may take credit to myself for any penetration, the charge thus brought forward by St. Jerome was a most invidious and unwarranted confectary deduced from the circumstance of Montanus having arrogated to himself the person of the Paraclete, and asserted that the Deity himself spake through him. For from this, his adversaries, as appears from Epiphanius, *Heres. xlvi. § ii. p. 412.* tom. i. *Opp.* were led to conclude that he wished to pass himself for the Deity; and a person who had been so mad as to have entertained such a wish, might certainly have appeared to his enemies, as desirous of abolishing all distinction of persons in the Godhead, and compressing the Deity in unius personæ angustias, namely, his own. In thus exonerating Montanus from the imputation of having violated the leading

of the Christians. For in the age in which he flourished there were not wanting, even amongst the

C E N T.
II.

The errors
of Monta-
nus.

leading principles of Christianity, the reader must not understand me, however, as meaning to insinuate that his errors were but of a light or trivial nature. For on the contrary, it is certain that he entertained very injurious, and not only injurious, but highly dangerous sentiments, respecting the moral discipline propounded by Christ and his apostles; a circumstance of itself sufficient to warrant his being excluded from the number of the orthodox Christians, and classed amongst heretics. He taught, for instance, that the moral law was left by the Son of God and his apostles, in an imperfect or rude and immature state, and that he himself was commissioned of the Holy Ghost to fill up and bring to perfection what Christ had thus left jejune and incomplete. This dogma, Tertullian, the most distinguished of all the followers of Montanus, hesitates not to propound in the most undisguised terms, in various parts of his writings, although, as to other things, he occasionally has recourse to subterfuge, and endeavours, in some degree, to qualify the opinions of his master. Let us hear how he speaks in his book *de Velandis Virginibus*, cap. i. p. 192. which may be taken as a fair specimen of the whole. *Juslitia*, (i.e. the moral law,) *primo fuit in rudimentis, natura Deum metuens, dehinc per legem & prophetas promovit in infantiam, dehinc per evangelium efferbuit in juventutem, nunc per Paracletum (Montanus) componitur in maturitatem. Hic erit solus a Christo, (i.e. after Christ) magister et dicendus et verendus.* Can any thing possibly be more evident? Montanus conceived that there was as much difference between the moral discipline enjoined by Moses and the prophets in the words of God, and that which was propounded by Christ, as there is between an infant and a young man, and that between the moral law of Christ and that prescribed by the Holy Ghost through himself, there existed as great an inequality, as there is between a youth and a man arrived at maturity. In another place *de Monogamia*, cap. xiv. p. 686. Tertullian expresses himself after the following manner, *Regnavit duritia cordis usque ad Christum, regnaverit & infirmitas carnis usque ad Paracletum.* It was his opinion therefore that Christ made an allowance for the infirmity of our flesh, and only contended against hardness of heart; but that Montanus, by the command of the Deity, assailed also the infirmity of

C E N T. the more orthodox Christians, certain who publicly avowed their approbation of most of those points

II.

The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

the flesh. Now this was certainly an essential error, and involved within it other errors of a like noxious nature, and equally subversive of the true principles of religion. The importance of this error is not diminished, but rather increased, by the consideration that the additions made by Montanus to the moral discipline enjoined by our blessed Saviour consisted merely of certain precepts of light moment relating to fasts, second marriages, the veiling of virgins, and other particulars, respecting external demeanour. For since Tertullian would willingly have us believe, that by the promulgation of these precepts, Montanus, or the Holy Spirit through him, had brought the moral law to maturity, or in other terms given the finishing hand to that which was before imperfect, it is plain that he must have considered external actions, modes, and institutions, and those too of rather a minute and trifling nature, as constituting the most material part of religion and piety; an opinion equally intolerable and pernicious with the former. Jesus Christ and his apostles have left it in command, that we should love the Lord our God beyond every thing, and our fellow mortals as ourselves. Now these injunctions, according to Montanus, were indeed very good, but at the same time merely juvenile ones, and calculated only for the Christian world during its minority; whereas the additions made to them by Montanus himself respecting fast-days, virgins wearing veils, the avoiding second marriages, and the like, carried the moral law to an infinitely higher degree of dignity and perfection, and rendered it suitable to the Christian commonwealth when advanced to the age of manhood and perfection. The sum and substance of the moral law therefore, it necessarily followed, was to be looked upon as contained in these minute and insignificant regulations. The latter of these errors was not, as far as can be ascertained at the present day, ever openly attributed to Montanus by his adversaries, but he was properly charged by them with the former, as with one of the most grievous nature. Nor have I the least doubt but that it was this error chiefly that occasioned him to be regarded in the light of an impostor, and produced the excommunication both of him and his followers. An ancient writer, whose catalogue of Heresies is annexed to Tertullian's book *de Præscript. Hæreticorum*, represents (in cap. lii. p. 254.) the Montanists

points which constituted the leading features of the discipline which he inculcated; such as that

fasts

C E N T.
II.

The errors
of Montanus.

as holding *Paracletum plura in Montano dixisse, quam Christum in Evangelio protulisse, nec tantum plura, sed etiam meliora atque majora.* And in this he certainly does them no injury whatever. For Tertullian, whose testimony necessarily carries with it peculiar weight, as coming from one who must have been intimately acquainted with the opinions of his sect, intimates this very thing in the words which we have above cited. The discipline of Christ is represented as bearing merely a juvenile character; that of Montanus one of masculine vigour and maturity. Who then can entertain a doubt but that the latter must have been deemed to have propounded greater and better things than the former? Those who are entrusted with the education of youth, over whom reason in general possesses but little influence, take care to accommodate their precepts to the infirmity of their charge; but greater and better things are brought forward by those to whom is committed the institution of persons arrived at man's estate, and whose unruly appetites have been brought into some sort of subjection. St. Jerome, (Epist. xxxvii. tom. iv. Opp. p. 64.) attributes to Montanus the same error, but exaggerates and amplifies it beyond all measure. *Deum voluisse in Veteri Testamento per Moysen & prophetas salvare mundum, sed quia non potuit explere, corpus sumpsisse de virgine, & in Christo sub specie filii prædicantem mortem obiisse pro nobis. Et quia per duos gradus mundum salvare nequiverit, ad extremum per Spiritum Sanctum in Montanum, Priscam & Maximillam, descendisse: & plenitudinem quam Paulus non habuerit... habuisse Montanum.* In this certainly, there is somewhat of truth, but it is coupled with one or two things that have no foundation whatever in fact. No grounds, for instance, exist for charging Montanus with entertaining the Sabellian dogma of one person in the Deity acting under the different characters of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; a thing altogether foreign from his mind; and the doctrine he inculcated respecting a change and gradual improvement in moral discipline is invidiously transferred to the catholic religion, and the mode of obtaining everlasting salvation. The conclusion to which, I think, equity would direct us, is, that Montanus and his associates were not aware of all the evils with which the great and dangerous error into which they fell was pregnant, and I am therefore unwilling to have him charged with all its consequences.

C E N T.
II.The errors
of Montanus.

fasts ought to be multiplied and protracted; that second marriages were unbecoming in persons professing the religion of Christ; that the church ought not to extend its pardon to persons guilty of the more grievous sins; that all decoration of the body ought to be disregarded; that for women to array themselves in costly attire was repugnant to the injunctions of the apostles Paul and Peter; that the study of letters and philosophy tended rather to injure than promote the cause of religion and piety; that virgins ought to wear veils, lest they might awaken impure desires in persons beholding them, that it was not allowable for Christians in times of persecution to betray any thing like timidity, or to adopt a prudential line of conduct; and, consequently, that it was incompatible with genuine Christian fortitude for persons, at such seasons, to endeavour to save themselves by flight, to redeem their lives by money, or to hold their meetings for the purposes of worship by stealth or in a private manner. Neither was any sort of stigma considered as attaching itself to those who defended such opinions, nor does it appear that they were on that account deemed the less worthy of being continued in communion with the faithful: indeed by many they were even highly commended, and by others were looked upon with an increased degree of respect and veneration (*b*). Notwithstanding, however, that
the

quences. The error, however, was in itself of the most grievous nature, and the accusers of Montanus appear to have well understood its enormity, a circumstance that must be allowed fully to justify their severity.

(*b*) Montanus asserted that it was the design of the Holy Spirit or Paraclete, through his means, to render perfect the system of moral discipline which Christ had left incomplete.

the shades of difference between the doctrine of Montanus and that of other Christians as to most points

CENT.
II.

The errors
of Montanus.

plete. The improvements, however, which he suggested as necessary to be made in the Christian code, had not any direct or immediate relation to the amendment of the interior man, or the furtherance of real and substantial piety, but primarily had respect merely to the reclaiming of Christians to a greater degree of strictness and gravity in their external demeanour. The most material of his precepts I have enumerated above; of which, however, it may not be improper to remark there are three, namely, those respecting the neglect of dress, the impropriety of female ornaments, and a contempt for letters and philosophy, which are not expressly attributed to Montanus by ancient writers, but which, inasmuch as they are warmly contended for by Tertullian, the most distinguished of his followers, might, I thought, with every degree of probability, be reckoned amongst the number of his institutes. The rest are indisputably his. In the first place then, he wished to introduce amongst Christians a greater frequency of fasting than had been customary. Other Christians, for instance, had contented themselves with celebrating only one solemn fast in the year, namely, the *Antepaschal* one; but Montanus enjoined his followers to observe two additional weeks, with the exception of the Saturdays and Sundays, as seasons of abstinence, that is, not absolutely to decline at such times taking any sustenance at all, but to content themselves with food of an arid, meagre nature, and to drink nothing therewith but water. The manner in which these additional yearly fasts, each of which consisted of five days, were observed, occasioned them to be termed *Xerophagiæ*. Montanus was also an advocate for the multiplication of private fasts: he did not however fix these at any particular number, but left every one at liberty to consult his own inclination, contenting himself with merely inculcating, in a general way, that frequent fasting was of wonderful efficacy in appeasing the Deity, as well as in healing the mind, and fortifying it against those evils to which Christians must of necessity be exposed. A more rigid celebration of those fasts which they observed in common with other Christians was likewise enjoined by this heresiarch to his followers. For whereas the Christians in general were accustomed, during the grand yearly antepaschal fast, to take some sort of refreshment after sunset, Montanus ordained that those of his sect should pursue

C E N T. points were but trifling, very sufficient cause ex-
 II. isted for expelling him from all communion with
 the

The errors
 of Monta-
 nus.

sue a different mode, and not only at this season, but also during any private fasts which they might think fit to impose on themselves, retire to rest supperless. The weekly fasts that were observed by the Christians of those times, *viz.* the fourth & sixth days, or as we term them Wednesdays and Fridays, were commonly considered as terminating at the ninth hour, or according to modern computation, at three o'clock in the afternoon; but Montanus would not allow of their being brought to such an early conclusion, and insisted on it that they should be prolonged until the evening. Of second marriages, which were considered by this heresiarch as unlawful, I say nothing. That St. Paul had given his sanction to them he did not pretend to deny, but contended that the Paraclete had, through him, revoked the license that had been granted by the apostle. Against Christians guilty of any of the more grievous sins, such as adultery, murder, and idolatry, equal severity was not exercised by all the churches. By most of them pardon was usually granted for the first offence to adulterers, but murderers and idolaters were always irrevocably excommunicated. Montanus, however, asserted it to be the command of the Holy Spirit, that persons polluted by either of the three enormous sins above mentioned should be expelled from the church absolutely, without any hope of return. Of the hope of obtaining forgiveness from God he did not pretend to deprive those people, but he insisted on it that the church ought, on no account, to be reconciled to them, lest in so doing its clemency might encourage a disposition to sin. In most churches it was customary for the widows and wives to go veiled; not so the virgins. Montanus enjoined that these latter also should wear veils. In times of persecution it had been not unusual for Christians either to redeem their lives of the Heathen magistrates with money, or, if they deemed this not justifiable, to consult their safety by flight. Against resorting to either of those expedients Montanus protested in the strongest terms, and exhorted the followers of Christ not to be put to flight by the threats of their enemies, but to meet them manfully and with disdain. Montanus, however, is not to be considered as the first author of these various precepts, but rather as having enforced what had been originally propounded by others. For as the early Christians differed in opinion as to many other things, so likewise were

the faithful. For those things which had been merely propounded by others in a spirit of meekness

C E N T.
II.

The errors
of Montanus.

were they far from being agreed as to the external services that were to be rendered to the Deity; and in the second century there existed, if it may be permitted us so to speak, two moral systems, whereof the more moderate and lenient one permitted Christians to follow the ordinary course of life in as far as it was not repugnant to or militated against the divine commands; but the more rigid and severe one sought not only to separate the followers of Christ from the rest of mankind in their manners, their garments, their discourse, and the whole regimen of their lives, but also to impose on them many more burthens, and to involve them in greater difficulties and dangers than were attached to the commands either of our blessed Lord or his apostles. With the exception of a very few things, the latter of these systems may be said to have worn almost the same aspect with that which was inculcated by Montanus and his associates. The Christians therefore, it appears, took no exceptions to the precepts of Montanus, nor could they, with the least propriety, have done so; for they not only tolerated principles similar to his in others, but even highly commended them. But this they could by no means bring themselves to bear with, that an individual should take upon him to pronounce those things to be of the first necessity, which were by others deemed merely good and useful; and to obtrude on the brethren his own opinions as new commands of the Holy Spirit supplementary to the system of morals promulgated by Christ: whence it inevitably followed that all who would not adopt them should be regarded as contemners of the Holy Spirit. All the regulations which Montanus was desirous of introducing amongst the Christians are manifestly in themselves of a light and trifling kind; but in his opinion they were excellent and of the last importance, in fact, every way worthy of being propounded to the human race as coming directly from the Holy Spirit himself. The less, however, the dignity attached to commands which any one may be willing to have us receive as dictated by the Holy Ghost, the greater the crime of him who would impose on the brethren such minute and trifling observances. Tertullian, indeed, in some places seems to express himself as if Montanus did not consider his precepts as possessed of any virtue or efficacy in the attainment of salvation, and regarded the communi-

cations

C E N T.

II.

The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

ness and without any detriment to christian harmony and liberty, were arrogantly brought forward by him as oracles dictated by the Holy Spirit, for the benefit of the universal church; whence it necessarily followed, that he must have regarded all those who refused to place implicit confidence in him and his female associates, as contemners of the Holy Spirit, and considered himself and his followers as constituting the only true church. This one circumstance of itself, without doubt, vir-

cations made by the Holy Spirit to mankind through him, in the light rather of admonition and advice than of laws and commands: but he does this only in places where he is seeking to throw all the blame of dissension and discord on his adversaries, or endeavouring to gain patrons and friends for himself and his associates. In others, where he assumes the character of the disputant, and undertakes the defence of Montanus, he, in no very obscure terms, intimates, that those who refused to comply with the injunctions of his preceptor, or rather of the Paraclete speaking through his preceptor, deprived themselves of very material assistance in obtaining everlasting salvation. And that the genuine sentiments of Montanus are given us in these last mentioned passages, is placed beyond a doubt by numerous testimonies. By way of shewing that I do not state this without some sort of foundation, I will adduce one passage in which he evidently holds out that by means of fasts expiation might be made for that sin of our first parents, which hath contaminated all their posterity, than which it is scarcely possible to devise any thing more foreign to the principles and spirit of Christianity. Porro, says he, (in *Lib. de Jejunis*, cap. iii. p. 705. edit. Rigalt.) *cum & ipse jejunium mandat - - quis jam dubitabit omnium erga vitium macerationum hanc fuisse rationem, qua rursus interdicto cibo & observato precepto, primordiale jam delictum expiaretur, ut homo per eandem materiam cause Deo satisfaciat, per quam offenderat, id est per cibi interdictionem, atque ita salutem amulo modo re-accenderet inedia, sicut extinxerat sagina, pro unico illicito plura licita contemnens.* In fact, Tertullian is not sufficiently consistent with himself, but, as is not uncommon with persons possessing a genius above controul, inclines at this time one way, and at that time another, according to circumstances.

tually

tually separated him from the church, and amply justified the Catholic Christians in refusing any longer to hold communion with him and his associates [i].

C E N T.
II.
The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

In

[i]. The opinions of the age in which he lived would not allow of its being imputed to Montanus as a crime, that he assumed the character of a prophet. A persuasion continued to prevail amongst the Christians of those times, that the spirit of prophecy had not become altogether extinct, and there were then in existence divers persons who were recognized by the Christians under the character of divine legates. What produced the separation between Montanus and the Catholic Christians was, that these latter felt assured within themselves by certain arguments and reasons, that he was not commissioned of God, but of the Devil. This opinion of theirs was grounded chiefly on the three following considerations. 1. That his prophetic effusions were delivered in an ecstasy, that is, as I conceive, he professed himself to utter these commands of the most High under the influence of an irresistible impulse, without being in the least degree conscious himself of what it was he said. 2. That he introduced the Deity himself as speaking. 3. That he promulgated, as coming immediately from God, laws that were partly new, and no where to be met with in the sacred writings, and in part contradictory to the institutions of Christ and his apostles. Of these arguments, the two former ones might, unless I am much mistaken, be confuted and completely gotten rid of, but the last is of the greatest weight, and can by no means be overthrown, although Tertullian with a zeal that may well excite our pity, labours strongly in diminishing its force. *Novitatem igitur, says he, (in Lib. de Jeuniis, cap. i. p. 701.) objeßant de cujus illicito præscribant: aut heresim judicandam, si humana præsumptio est, aut pseudo-prophetiam pronuntiandam, si spiritualis indiciõ est. - - - Certe in Evangelio illos dies jejuniis determinatos putant, in quibus ablati sunt sponsus, & hos esse jam solos legitimos jejuniorum Christianorum, abolitis legalibus et prophetiis vetustatibus. - - - Differenter jejunandum ex arbitrio, non ex imperio novæ disciplina, pro temporibus et causis uniuscujusque. - - Sic & Apostolos observasse, &c.* To which add what is said by him in his book *de Monogamia, cap. i. p. 673.* where he clearly intimates it to be a point in dispute between the Catholics and Montanists; *An capiat Paracletum aliquid tale docuisse, quod aut novum deputari possit adversus Catholicam traditionem, aut onerosum adversus*

C E N T. In the prophecies moreover which were uttered
 II. by this heresiarch and his female companions
 there

The errors
 of Mon-
 tanus.

adversus levem sarcinam Domini. No one surely, let him boast what he may of being commissioned of God to promulgate a more holy and perfect system of moral discipline than was prescribed by our blessed Saviour and his apostles, unless he at the same time bring forward something that may assist our faith, or contribute towards the further purification of our minds, can have the least pretensions to be ranked amongst the number of divinely-inspired teachers or prophets. By the adversaries of Montanus, indeed, somewhat more has been built upon this argument than can, in point of fairness, be deduced from it, for it certainly by no means warranted the conclusion that Montanus was inspired of the Devil. The argument itself, however, is in no degree affected by this error, but was possessed of the same force in that age as it has at present. Montanus on the other hand most strenuously contended, that the Deity himself, or the Paraclete, spake through him, and was loud in his reproach of all those who refused him their support. The only true church, he asserted, consisted of himself and his followers; the rest were, without exception, condemned by him as spurious. An ancient writer, cited by Eusebius (*Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xvi. p. 181), says, τὴν δὲ καθολικὴν καὶ πασῶν τὴν ὑπὸ τὸν ἑβραίων ἐκκλησίαν βλασφημῆεν διδάσκωντος τῷ ἀπηνυδατισμένῳ πνεύματος, ὅτι μήτε τιμὴν μήτε πάροδον εἰς αὐτὴν τὸ ψευδοπροφητικὸν ἐλάβεσαν πνεῦμα. *Universam vero, quae per orbem terrarum sparsa est, ecclesiam, idem ille arrogantissimus spiritus maledictis appetere eos docebat, eo quod nec honorem nec aditum ullum ad ipsam pseudo-propheticus spiritus aperiret.* And beyond all doubt this statement is entitled to the highest credit, for unless Montanus would have been inconsistent with himself, it was necessary for him boldly to assert that all such churches as opposed him were at enmity with the Holy Spirit, and alienated from God. Themison, in like manner, who ranks not as the last of his adherents, is charged by Apollonius *apud Euseb.* l. c. cap. xviii. p. 185. with having, in the catholic epistle that he wrote, spoken blasphemously of our Lord and his apostles, (*viz.* by asserting that the moral discipline which they had inculcated was imperfect), and also of the holy church: βλασφημῆσαι δὲ εἰς τὸν κύριον καὶ τὰς ἀποστόλους καὶ τὴν ἁγίαν ἐκκλησίαν. Hence Montanus (as is also intimated by Apollonius *apud Euseb.* l. c. cap. xviii.

there was a tone which might well induce the Christians at large to avoid maintaining any sort of intercourse

CENT.
II.

The errors
of Mon-
tanus.

p. 184. and confirmed by the testimony of other authors), was led to give Pepuza and Tymium, the two little towns of Phrygia, where he and his associates resided, the title of Jerusalem, *i. e.* the only true church, with a view to gather together there men from all parts. Tertullian is not at all more mild or lenient than these, although, as I have above noticed, he occasionally seems desirous of paving the way towards an accommodation; for he takes every opportunity of loading all such Christians as differed from Montanus, with contumely, and constantly applies to them the title *Psychici*, *i. e.* men destitute of the Holy Spirit; whilst he terms those who sided with that heresiarch, *Spirituales*, and the only Holy. *Penes nos autem*, says he, in *lib. de Monogamia*, cap. i. p. 673. *quos spirituales merito dici facit agnitio spiritualium charismatum, continentia tam religiosa est. - - - Sed Psychicis non recipientibus spiritum ea quæ sunt spiritus non placent.* What need I add that in his book *de Pudicitia*, cap. xxi. p. 744. he, without the least circumlocution denies any church in opposition to Montanus to be the true one? *Quid nunc & ad ecclesiam & quidem tuam Psychice? - - - Ecclesia proprie & principaliter ipse est spiritus, in quo est Trinitas unius Divinitatis, Pater & Filius & Spiritus Sanctus.* (where we may observe by the bye, the grounds on which Montanus and his followers came to be charged with Sabellianism. For Tertullian speaks as if he believed all the three persons of the divine nature to be only that one which animated Montanus. *Et ideo ecclesia quidem delicta condonabit, sed ecclesia spiritus (i. e. of Montanus), per spiritalem hominem, non ecclesia numerus episcoporum.* From what we have thus adduced it is manifest, that instead of the Catholic Christians expelling Montanus from the church, the separation rather originated with him, and that he withdrew himself from a church that he could not consider as the true spouse of Christ. And indeed the Montanists themselves confessed that the origin of the division was not to be imputed to the Catholic Christians, but that they themselves first seceded, refusing any longer to hold communion with what Tertullian terms *Psychica et carnalis ecclesia*. Epiphanius *Heret.* xlvi. cap. xii. p. 413. λέγουσι διὰ χαρίσματα ἀφεσθάναι της εκκλησιας. *Jactant se ob cælestia dona (i. e. the Prophecies of Montanus which the Catholic Christians rejected) ab ecclesia discessisse.*

And

C E N T.

II.

The errors of
Montanus.

intercourse with him ; for since he announced the most disastrous fortunes as awaiting the human race, there was certainly reason to apprehend that the Christians, if they continued in association with him might come to be regarded as enemies to the commonwealth [k].

LXVIII. Amongst

And the same author twice recognizes this as a true representation of the case in the introduction to his history of this sect, remarking, in cap. i. p. 402, 403, that the Montanists separated themselves (*ἀπέσχισαν δὲ ἑαυτοῖς*), from the church ; and a little while after that *ἐξέβησαν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων*, they withdrew themselves from the fold of the saints. All sort of communion being renounced, and war publicly declared, by Montanus, against the church, the bishops of Asia retaliated by disclaiming, in solemn convocation, all further connection with a man whose hostility to the church was, by his own declaration, thus placed beyond a question. And to what other conclusion, I pray, could this affair have led ? Between a man who, professing himself to be a legate of the most High, declares war against all such as may venture to call in question his commission, and those who not only call in question such his commission, but also think themselves justified in regarding that man as a false prophet, and one of the agents of the devil, what sort of communion, either of offices or religion, can, for a moment, possibly be maintained ? I have entered the more fully into this subject for the purpose of shewing what a wrong estimate, respecting the schism of Montanus, has been formed by such of the learned as attribute the whole blame of discord and division, on this occasion, to the Catholic Christians. That the conduct of these latter was in no degree reprehensible is what I do not take upon me to assert ; but this much, certainly, is apparent, that Montanus originated the quarrel, and that the Catholic Christians had abundant cause for condemning a man who had not only imbibed the most pernicious opinions, but had also been the author of a schism or separation in the church.

[k] At the time when Montanus prophesied, namely, under the reign of the emperor Marcus Aurelius the philosopher, the affairs of the Christians were every where, as we have above shewn, involved in the utmost peril. It became, therefore, a matter of the very first importance to them to be strictly on their guard, lest, in any thing which they

LXVIII. Amongst the adversaries of Montanus none held a more distinguished place than Praxeas, a man

C E N T.
II.
Praxeas.

they might say, teach, or do, they might lay themselves open to misrepresentation, or furnish the Romans with any pretext for accusation or complaint. But that imprudent, or rather insane man, Montanus, predicted, without reserve, a variety of things in the highest degree obnoxious to the Romans; such, for instance, as the overthrow of their city and empire; the destruction that awaited the world; wars, plagues, and calamities of divers kinds, that might speedily be expected, as well as the tremendous advent of Antichrist; concerning which things, whoever dared to utter any prophecies, were always considered by the Romans as enemies to the state, and consequently made to undergo capital punishment. Tertullian, in his apology for Montanus, a work that unfortunately has perished, reduces the whole matter in dispute between his master and other Christians under two general heads, namely, "second marriages," and "the future judgment." His words are preserved in the ancient work edited by J. Sirmond, Paris, 1645, 8vo. that goes under the title of *Prædestinatus*, lib. i. cap. xxv. p. 30. *Hoc solum discrepamus, quod secundas nuptias non recipimus, et prophetiam Montani de futuro judicio non recusamus.* It is to be observed that Tertullian here makes light of the controversy between Montanus and the church, as was customary with him whenever he conceived that it might tend to promote his purpose; but on this we shall not stay at present to make any remark. All that we would wish to impress on the reader's attention is, that it is clear from these words that Montanus had, amongst other things, predicted somewhat respecting a future judgment, and that this prophecy of his was held most sacred, and had more than ordinary weight attached to it by his followers; but that it was marked with the most decided disapprobation by the catholic Christians. It would be idle in any one to pretend to refer this prediction to the last general judgment of the world and the human race; for as to this there was the most perfect accordance between Montanus and all other Christians. Indeed it was impossible that the Christians should make it a matter of accusation against Montanus, that he predicted the near approach of the last judgment; for it was at that time a point of common belief with the whole church, that the final consummation of all things was at hand. We are

CENT.

II.

Praxeas.

a man of no mean reputation in the church, inasmuch as he had, on an occasion that involved his

bound to conclude, therefore, that Montanus predicted the approach of some particular judgment (*i. e.* some calamities and evils not far remote) of which the Christians knew that they could not join with him in prophesying without involving themselves in the utmost peril. But what else could this be than the judgment that awaited the Roman empire? The temerity of this man, unless I am altogether deceived, was such, that he announced the most signal punishments as about to fall on the Romans, the enemies of the Christian faith, and predicted, at no very distant period, the final overthrow of the whole empire. That other Christians, as to this, entertained a belief similar to his, namely, that our blessed Saviour would speedily avenge the blood of his slaughtered servants on the Romans, and overturn their government, is what I very well know. But of this their belief they made a secret, referring it to the *Disciplina Arcani*, or that kind of knowledge which it was deemed expedient to cherish in silence, and entrust only to a few of approved stability and faith, inasmuch as they were well assured that any disclosure or promulgation of it could not be made without exposing their fortunes to the utmost jeopardy and hazard. And in this place I will content myself with referring merely to those prophecies respecting the dreadful calamities which awaited the Roman empire, that are set down as received from the mouths of the Christians by the author of *Philopatris* (a work commonly ascribed to Lucian): vid. *Luciani Opera*, tom. iii. p. 613 & seq. edit. Reizian. Hence we are furnished with an easy interpretation of the words of an ancient writer cited by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xvi. p. 180, and of which the learned have hitherto confessed themselves utterly unable to elicit the meaning. He says that Montanus foretold things that were to come, *παρὰ τὸ κατὰ παράδεισον καὶ κατὰ διαδοχὴν ἀνωδὲν τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἔδος, præter morem atque institutum Ecclesiæ a majoribus traditum et continua deinceps successione propagatum*; which is as much as to say that it was the ancient and invariable usage of the church cautiously to abstain from divulging or making public mention of any tenets or prophecies that might tend to excite animosity against the Christians, or bring them into danger; such, for instance, as those which respected the coming of Antichrist, the overthrow of the Roman

his life in the utmost peril, manfully avowed his faith in Christ before a heathen tribunal, and on the same account undergone an imprisonment of no inconsiderable duration [1]. Having at a subsequent

C E N T.
II.
Praxeas.

Roman empire, or any other impending evils or calamities. But Montanus broke through this custom, and proclaimed to the world what had never before been communicated to any except confidential ears. And in this most hazardous line of conduct the females, who had espoused the cause of Montanus, should seem to have been by no means backward in following the example of their master; for Maximilla predicted πολέμους καὶ ἀκαταστασίας, “wars and tumults” as awaiting the Roman empire (Euseb. l. c. p. 182), and that, after her death, no more propheteesses would arise, but people might look for συντέλεια τῆ ἀϊωνος “the consummation of all things.” These prophecies, supposing that nothing else offensive or objectionable had been brought forward by Montanus and his associates, must surely, of themselves, have justified all such Christians as had the welfare of the church at heart, in excluding these bold and incautious men from their society. The sect of the Montanists, as they themselves boast, and the ancient fathers do not pretend to deny, abounded in martyrs. It should seem, however, not at all improbable, that most of these might have fallen martyrs to their own imprudence and temerity, rather than in the cause of Christ, and been put to death by the Roman magistrates as conspirators against the commonwealth.

[1] For whatever can, with any degree of certainty, be offered in the way of history respecting Praxeas, we are of necessity indebted wholly to the treatise written in continuation of his doctrine by Tertullian, a work by no means deficient either in learning or address, but obscure in the extreme, and vehement beyond all measure; a work, in fact, written by a man who was an enemy, not only to the Praxeian doctrine, but also to the author of that doctrine, inasmuch as he had been the chief instrument in prevailing on the bishop of Rome, who had at first lent a favourable ear to Montanus and his prophecies, and whom learned men conceive to have been Victor, to change sides, and go over to his adversaries. This offence against his master kindled such wrath in the bosom of Tertullian, that he sets no bounds whatever to his reprehension, and occasionally breaks out into an abusive strain, altogether unbecoming the Christian

C E N T.
 II.
 Praxeas.

subsequent period, however, been led to engage zealously in the task of combating the erroneous doctrines of others, he unfortunately fell into an error himself respecting the Divine Nature and the Saviour of the human race, not at all less grievous than those with which he had undertaken to contend ; for by means of various arguments, supported by passages drawn from the holy scriptures, he endeavoured to do away all distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and maintained that it was not some one divine Person, but the Father, the sole Creator of all things, that united himself with human

Christian character. In contemplating the nature of Praxeas's error, I have been led to suspect, and I think not without reason, that such error might have had its origin in his hostility to Montanus. Montanus, as appears from Tertullian, had, in his oracles, treated of the dogma of the existence of three persons in the divine nature, and studiously inculcated a true and real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Vid. Tertullian *contra Praxeam*, c. xiii. p. 644. *Nos*, says he, *maxime Paracliti, non hominum discipuli, duos quidem definiimus, Patrem et Filium, et jam tres cum Spiritu Sancto, secundum rationem æconomie, quæ facit numerum.* And in the same book, cap. ii. p. 635, Tertullian avows himself, by means of the Paraclete (*i. e.* Montanus), whom he terms *deductor omnis veritatis*, to have been better instructed in the dogma respecting God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit ; that is, he had received from the mouth of the Paraclete a fuller and clearer knowledge of that dogma. Praxeas, then, the decided opponent of Montanus as to most other things, being in all probability determined to have nothing whatever in common with such a man, and expecting perhaps that it might place his adversary in a still more invidious light, came, as I suspect, to the resolution of refusing him on this ground also, and, in opposition to the dogma of Montanus, recognizing a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, sent forth his own dogma asserting the absolute individuality of the Deity. An infinity of examples might be adduced of men whom the very love of truth itself has plunged into error.

nature

nature in the person of Christ. Hence his followers came to be termed *Monarchians* and *Patripassians* [m]. Being detected in this error, and publicly

C E N T.
II.
Praxeas.

[m] Tertullian's book against Praxeas is unquestionably of a very sufficient length, but at the same time it is not so explicit as to bring us thoroughly acquainted with the opinions of the man whom it is its object to confute. Of this indeed it leaves us in no doubt, that Praxeas denied a distinction of persons in the Divine Nature, we mean, any real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and contended for what is termed by Tertullian the *Monarchy* of God. In fact, it should seem that he considered those who recognized any real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as maintaining the existence of three Gods. After what manner, however, Praxeas expounded those passages of Scripture which relate to the Son and the Holy Spirit, and contrived to make them accord with his tenets, is far from being equally perspicuous. From certain passages in Tertullian's work, it should seem to have been the opinion of this heresiarch, that, by the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three modes of existence, as well as agency of the Divine Nature, were indicated, and that the Deity, when existing and operating in Christ, after a new and unaccustomed manner, assumed the title of Son, but that, when residing and acting in holy and pious persons, it was his will to be denominated the Holy Spirit. *Post tempus*, says Tertullian, when speaking the sentiments of his adversary, cap. ii. p. 634. *pater natus et pater passus; ipse Deus, Dominus omnipotens, Jesus Christus predicatur.* And shortly after, cap. iii. p. 635. *Unicum Deum non alias putat credendum, quam si ipsum, eundemque et Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum dicat. - - - Numerum et dispositionem Trinitatis divisionem presumunt Trinitatis. - - - Itaque duos et tres jam jaecitant a nobis predicari, se vero unius Dei cultores presumunt, quasi non et unitas irrationaliter collecta, haeresim faciat, et Trinitas rationaliter expensa veritatem constituat. Monarchiam (inquiunt) tenemus.* cap. v. p. 637. But to pass on to more explicit proofs, in chap. x. p. 680. Tertullian thus expresses the sentiments of the Monarchians: *Neque Pater idem et Filius ut sint ambo unus et utrumque alter, quod vanissimi isti Monarchiani volunt. Ipse se, inquiunt, Filium sibi fecit.* Indeed, that there was nothing repugnant or absurd in this opinion, they pretended to demonstrate by

C E N T. publicly accused thereof at Rome, he put on the
 II. appearance of concession, and, in a recantation
 PRAXEAS. which

the example of a virgin's bringing forth without having known man. *Ergo, inquit, difficile non fuit Deo, ipsum se et Patrem et Filium facere, adversus traditam formam rebus humanis. Nam et sterilem parere contra naturam difficile Deo non fuit, sicut nec virginem.* Now these things, unless I am altogether deceived, can be understood after no other manner than this: The Deity, who is, in the strictest sense of the word, One, put on, in some sort a different form, and assumed a different mode of existing and acting, when, joining himself to Christ, he took the name of a Son, and, under that character, conveyed instruction to the human race. *Deus fecit se sibi Filium:* for, being possessed of infinite power, he can easily vary his essence at pleasure. The very passages of the New Testament, moreover, by which Praxeas endeavoured to uphold his dogma, seem to demonstrate that it ought to be expounded in the way that I have pointed out. *Sed,* says Tertullian, cap. xx. p. 651. *argumentationibus eorum adhuc retundendis opera præbenda est. - - - Nam sicut in veteribus nihil aliud tenent quam, ego Deus, et alius præter me non est, ita in Evangelio responsum Domini ad Philippum tuerentur: ego et Pater unum sumus; et, qui me viderit, videt et Patrem: et ego in Patre et Pater in me. His tribus capitulis totum instrumentum utriusque testamenti volunt cedere:* which words, whoever shall adduce, by way of doing away all distinction between the Father and the Son, must necessarily hold that there is no difference whatever between the Father and the Son, except the mode or form of existing and acting. But this interpretation of the Praxean dogma is opposed by certain other passages in Tertullian, wherein he expressly intimates it to have been the opinion of his adversary, that the title of Son, as given to Christ, ought not to be considered as the name of the Deity residing in Christ, but of his human nature; that the Deity himself, who is termed the Father, united to himself the Man Christ; and that this same Man was denominated the Son of God in consequence of his having been begotten by the Deity of the Virgin Mary; a way of thinking not at all to be reconciled with his having taught, that what was divine in Christ was a certain form or mode of the Divine Nature to which the Deity gave the title of *Son*, by way of distinguishing it from that other form or mode which is termed *the Father*.

Let

which he wrote and published, professed his entire acquiescence in the catholic sentiments respecting

C E N T.
II.
Praxeas.

Let us hear Tertullian himself, cap. xxvii. p. 659. *undique obduci distinctione Patris et Filii* (that is, borne down and overwhelmed by the words of the sacred volume, in which express distinction is made between the Father and the Son) *quam, manente conjunctione, disponimus ut solis et radii, et fontis et fluvii, per individuum tamen numerum duorum et trium; aliter eam ad suam nihilominus sententiam interpretari conantur ut æque in una persona utrumque distinguant, Patrem et Filium, dicentes Filium carnem esse, id est, Hominem, id est, Jesum; Patrem autem Spiritum* (meaning the soul, if I mistake not), *id est, Deum, id est, Christum. Et qui unum eundemque contendunt Patrem et Filium, jam incipiunt dividere illos potius quam unare. Si enim alius est Jesus, alius Christus, alius erit Filius, alius Pater, quia Filius Jesus, et Pater Christus. Talem Monarchiam apud Valentinum fortassis didicerunt, duos facere Jesum et Christum.* Agreeably to this opinion, Praxeas maintained *Patrem passum esse in Christo*, or, as he preferred expressing it, *compassum esse cum Filio*, or, with the Man Jesus. Tertullian, cap. xxix. p. 662. observes, *Ergo nec compassus est Pater Filio; sic enim directam blasphemiam in Patrem veriti, diminui eam hoc modo sperant, concedentes jam Patrem & Filium duos esse: si Filius quidem patitur, Pater vero compatitur. Stulti & in hoc. Quid est enim compati quam cum alio pati? - - Times dicere passibilem quem dicis compassibilem.* From which passage, by the bye, it is apparent how the followers of Praxeas came to be termed *Patripassians*, as also, that, by this appellation, no sort of injury was done them, as certain of the learned have supposed. Those who deny that the title of *Patripassians* could with propriety be assigned to them, do so under the impression that these people believed the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be three forms or modes of the divine nature; which, it is plain, must be at the least very uncertain, from what we have above remarked. In addition, then, to those remarks, if this title be taken into the account, I think not a doubt can well be entertained but that the latter of the two expositions above given of the Praxean dogma must be the right one. We may, therefore, consider Praxeas as having maintained, I. That the Deity is in the strictest sense an individual Being, altogether uncompounded and indivisible. II. That this Being is in holy writ termed the Father. III. That this same individual

CENT.

II.

Praxeas.

specting the Divine Nature. Upon passing over afterwards into Africa, however, he again stood forth

dividual Being formed for himself a Son in the Man Jesus. IV. That he coalesced, in one Person, with such Man, his Son. V. That when this Man, his Son, suffered, he, the Father, suffered with him. VI. That whenever our Saviour, therefore, is termed the Son of God, this title must be considered as applying merely to his human nature. What the opinion of Praxeas was respecting the Holy Spirit is no where expressly pointed out by Tertullian. It may readily, however, be conceived, from the nature of his discipline, that he must have regarded it as a sort of ray or virtue of the Father, *i. e.* the Deity. Whether Tertullian, moreover, who, as we have seen, gives two different expositions of the Praxean dogma, did not at the first sufficiently comprehend its nature and force, and was too precipitate in applying to the Divine Nature the saying of the Monarchians, *Deus ipse se sibi Filium fecit*: or whether the Monarchians, upon finding themselves driven, as it were, into a corner by the multitude of passages in holy writ, in which a clear distinction is made between the Father and the Son, forsook their former opinion, and had recourse to that other which acquired for them the denomination of Patripassians, must of necessity be left undetermined. But now another question suggests itself. Since it is certain that Praxeas did not consider the eternal Son of God, or any mode of the Divine Nature under the name of a Son, to have been resident in the Man Christ, but believed the whole Father, or the Deity, to have taken up his abode in the Son of God, that is, in the Man formed by God, in what way are we to understand what he says of the association of the Father with the Man Jesus? Did he, by the title of the Father, mean to be understood as designating the very Person of the Father or Deity, or merely a certain power, or efficiency, as some term it, of God the Father? Almost every one leans to the former opinion, and I think not without reason, if any faith is to be placed in Tertullian, who is the only author from whom any information, as to this dogma of Praxeas, is to be derived in the present day; for, in a variety of passages, this writer represents his adversary as having maintained that the Father was born and suffered on the cross; nay, he adduces the Monarchians themselves as in a certain degree acknowledging this, inasmuch as they pronounced the Father to have

forth the avowed patron of the doctrine which he had abjured at Rome, and fought and obtained

C E N T.
II.

Praxeas.

have suffered together with the Son; an idea, which, if I am possessed of the least penetration, the followers of Praxeas could never have entertained, had they imagined that it was merely a certain power or virtue of the Father that was present in the Son. For how could a certain divine power or efficiency, communicated to the Son for a time, have suffered and been crucified with him? Mich. Le Quien, however, the learned editor of Damascene's works, would rather have us believe *Praxeam censuisse Dominum Jesum sola Deitatis efficientia imbutum fuisse, non autem esse personam Patris, quæ in Deitate et humanitate substitisset ut Pater proprie passus et crucifixus diceretur.* Adnot. ad Damascen. *Lib. de Hæresibus*, tom. i. p. 90. In support of this interpretation, however, the learned writer adduces nothing but that one passage of Tertullian, cap. xxvii. p. 659. just above cited, in which he represents the Monarchians as maintaining *Patrem esse Spiritum Jesu, id est, Deum.* But how, from this passage, any thing like that which he takes to be the true exposition of the Praxean dogma is to be supported, I must confess myself utterly at a loss to comprehend. The learned Pet. Wesseling, therefore, found but little difficulty in overthrowing this new interpretation of the Monarchian tenets, and upholding the ancient one by numerous citations from Tertullian. See his *Probabilia*, cap. xxvi. p. 223 & seq. Franeg 1731, 8vo. My own sentiments as to this matter are already given. If Tertullian is deserving of attention, the dogma of the Monarchians admits of no other interpretation than what has commonly been given to it, and which the reader will find specified above. I would be far, however, from dissembling, that it may be a matter of some doubt how far Tertullian, whose treatise against Praxeas was obviously the production of a mind, hostile, perturbed, and boiling with indignation, is to be relied upon for having given us an ingenuous, ample, and faithful exposition of the opinions of his adversary. By accident I met with a notable passage in Justin Martyr, *Dial. cum Tryphone*, p. 371, 372. edit. Jebbian. in which he observes, that amongst the Christians of his time, there were some who maintained that the word of God, or the Son, was merely a certain power or virtue of the Father, and which could in no wise be separated from the Father; as the light of the sun upon the earth is
not

C E N T.
II.

Theodotus
and
Artemon.

tained many adherents from amongst the people. It does not, however, appear that he became the parent of a particular sect.

LXIX. Just about the same period, or some short time before, the Catholic doctrine respecting Christ and the existence of three persons in the divine nature was assailed after a different manner by one Theodotus, who had passed over to Rome from Constantinople, and practised the

not to be disunited from that which shines in the heavens; that such divine virtue had manifested itself in many different ways, and hence had acquired a variety of names, being sometimes termed an Angel, sometimes a Glory, at other times a man, and, at others the Word; that God emitted this virtue at his will, and again at his will recalled it: γινώσκω τινας φάσκειν τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τῆ πατρὸς τῶν ὄλων φανεῖσθαι - - - ἄγγελον καλεῖσθαι ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους προόδῳ. *Scio esse qui dicant virtutem a Patre rerum omnium proveniente, Angelum vocari cum ad homines progreditur: δόξαν δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἐν φαντασίᾳ φαίνεται. Gloriam vero, cum in visione quadam exhibetur. ἄνδρα δὲ ποτὲ καὶ ἄνθρωπον καλεῖσθαι ἐπειδὴ ἐν μορφῶις τοιαύταις φαίνεται. Virum autem et hominem nominari quando in formis ejusmodi (namely in the form of a man, or a human being) conspicitur. καὶ λόγον καλεῖσθαι, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰς τῆ πατρὸς ὁμιλίᾳς φέρει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. Verbum appellari eam quod patris sermones ad homines perferat. ἀχώριστον τῆ πατρὸς ταυτην τὴν δύναμιν ὑπάρχειν, ὅπερ τρόπον τὸ τῆ ἡλίου φῶς ἐπὶ γῆς εἶναι ἀχώριστον ὄντος τῆ ἡλίου ἐν τῷ ἕρανῳ. Virtutem autem illam a patre nullo modo disjungi posse, quemamodum solis lux in terris a sole qui in calo est segregari nequit. Ὁ πατὴρ, ὅταν βέληται, δύναμιν αὐτῆ προπεθεῖν ποιεῖ. καὶ ὅταν βέληται, παλιὴ ἀναστρέφει εἰς ἑαυτὸν. Pater cum vult, efficit ut hæc ejus virtus profliat, & cum vult, eandem ad seipsum retrahit.* Now those who taught a doctrine like this, must necessarily have denied all real distinction of persons in the divine nature, and believed the divine nature of Christ to have been merely a virtue or ray sent forth for a while from the eternal light of the father. To this description of Christians it is not impossible that Praxeas might belong, and that having, with a view in some measure to disguise his tenets, expounded them differently at different times, Tertullian was prevented from attaining to any thing like an exact or precise knowledge of them.

art

art of a tanner, but was, notwithstanding, a man of no mean proficiency in letters [n]. This heresiarch denied altogether the divinity of Christ, refusing to acknowledge in him any other kind of personal excellence than that of his corporeal frame having been divinely begotten [o]. The same doctrine is said to have been

C E N T.
II.
Theodotus
and
Artemon.

[n] Respecting Theodotus and Artemon, there is a long quotation given by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. v. cap. xxviii. from an ancient writer whose name is not mentioned. But neither from this, nor from Epiphanius, nor Theodoret, nor any other of the ancient hæresiologists can we obtain a full and satisfactory account of these men and their opinions.

[o] Theodotus, as is related much at large by Epiphanius, *Hæres.* liv. cap. i, ii, iii. p. 464. & seq. and in a shorter way by Tertullian, Augustine, and Philaster, being called in question at Constantinople on account of his religion, abjured his faith in Christ, and when he was sharply reproached with this by the Christians of Rome, to which city he had fled for refuge, he, by the excuse which he offered, plunged still deeper into sin. For he denied himself to have committed any offence at all against God, inasmuch as Christ, whom he had denied, was nothing more than a mere man. That this account should have been invented there is no reason whatever for believing. We are not however furnished by it with any thing like a perspicuous or satisfactory view of this heresiarch's sentiments respecting Christ; nor are the ancient writers agreed in their exposition of his tenets on this subject. Epiphanius states him to have maintained that Jesus was begotten according to the same law by which all other mortals are produced, namely, of the seed of man. But the ancient author of the *Catalogue of Heretics*, annexed to Tertullian's prescriptions, and with whom Theodoret agrees, says, that Theodotus did indeed regard Christ as a mere man, but then as a man that had been begotten of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. And to this testimony learned men are disposed to give more credit than to Epiphanius, a writer of no great weight, and far from being correct in his account of heretical opinions. But if the inference be just to which learned men have been led by the ancient author of the *Little Labyrinth*, a work written in opposition to the Theodotians and

C E N T.

II.

Theodotus
and
Artemon.

been maintained at Rome, either some short time before, or else within a little while after Theodotus, by one Artemas or Artemon, from whom the *Artemonites* took their denomina-

and Artemonites, and from which a citation is given by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. 28. namely, that the doctrine of Artemon was the same with that of Theodotus, the correctness of even this last statement will admit of being called in question. For not to notice that there are not wanting those who conceive the opinions of Artemon to have corresponded with those of Paul of Samosata or Arius, we are told by Gennadius of Marseilles *de Dogmat. Ecclesiast.* cap. iii. p. 4. edit. Elmenhorst. that Artemon held, *Christum divinitatis initium nascendo accepisse*. He did not therefore deny Christ to be God and man, but conceived him to have been styled God in consequence of God's having associated himself with the man Christ from the very commencement of his existence; which opinion more nearly corresponds with that which, as we have above shewn, was entertained by Praxeas, than with that which is commonly attributed to Theodotus. Artemon's opinion, we mean, was, that a certain divine power, not a person, united itself to the man Christ who was born of a virgin, and that in consequence of this association of the divinity with the human nature of Christ, he who was a man was in the sacred writings also termed God, and might be styled God. But to confess the truth, it appears to me to be much less certain than is commonly imagined, that Theodotus and Artemon entertained one and the same opinion respecting Christ. Theodoret clearly makes a distinction between the Theodotians and the Artemonites; and although the author of the *Little Labyrinth*, as quoted by Eusebius, associates them together in his work, and directs his arguments against them jointly, it is yet far from being clear that there were no points of dissension between them. This much certainly they had in common, that they denied all real distinction of persons in the Godhead, and consequently would not admit that a divine person had united himself with Christ. Wherefore they might well be encountered in one and the same work, and with one and the same set of arguments. But a community of sentiments as to these particulars by no means rendered it impossible that they should differ in their opinions respecting Christ.

tion.

tion [p]. Towards the close of the century Theodotus was condemned by the Roman bishop Victor; and it should seem not unlikely that Artemon and his disciples were excommunicated by the same prelate.—The notices that have reached us respecting these sects, both of which should seem to have quickly disappeared, are but scanty. The circumstance of all others most deserving of attention in respect to them is, that the Theodotians and Artemonites are said to have set a great value on philosophy and geometry, indeed more than well comported with a proper respect for religion and the sacred writings [q]. In truth the principal fruit derived from the introduction of a taste for the Grecian philosophy amongst the Christians was, that by the application of its precepts to the mysteries of religion, birth was given to a variety of opinions and disputes respecting the manner in which these latter ought to be understood.

C E N T.
II.
Theodotus
and
Artemon.

LXX. A station in point of time somewhat prior to these last-mentioned corrupters of the Catholic doctrine respecting the divine nature

Hermogenes.

[p] Whether it was Theodotus or Artemon that first disturbed the church by the propagation of an erroneous doctrine, is one of those subjects on which the learned are divided, with scarcely any preponderance of argument on either side. The reader, if he please, may pass over a question so uncertain and minute; but should any one wish to know and weigh the arguments that are adduced on either side, he may have recourse to Wesseling, who in his *Probabilia*, cap. xxi. p. 172—180, having diligently pondered the whole of them, coincides with those who consider Theodotus as having preceded Artemon.

[q] With regard to this there is given us by Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxviii. p. 197. & seq. a passage from an ancient writer which is well deserving of attention, although the reprehension it conveys may be thought, perhaps, somewhat too severe.

and

C E N T.

II.

Hermo-
genes.

and the Saviour of the human race, appears to belong to Hermogenes, a painter by profession, but at the same time a man of a subtle genius, and a philosopher, whom we find denounced by Tertullian as a heretic of the first class, although he seems never to have become the parent of any particular sect, but to have passed the whole of his days in undisturbed communion with the church [r]. Hermogenes was a corrupter of the catholic doctrine respecting the origin of the world. For since he considered matter as the source or fountain of all evil, he felt it incum-

[r] Amongst the works of Tertullian that are extant, there is a vehement philippic of his against Hermogenes, possessing some degree of merit it is true in point of ingenuity and eloquence, but written in style at once difficult and obscure. In this work Tertullian encounters merely the tenets of Hermogenes respecting matter and the origin of the world. The opinion of the latter concerning the nature of the soul had been attacked by him in another book now lost, which he notices in his Treatise *de Anima*, cap. i. as intitled *de Censu Animæ*. In this contention with Hermogenes, Tertullian is remarkably abusive, although he does not pretend to deny that his adversary was a man of genius, eloquence, and sound understanding as to the leading principles and tenets of the Christian religion; which will appear the more surprising to those who are aware that the Christians, in the age of which we are treating, were accustomed to deal more mildly with those who considered matter as having existed with the Deity from all eternity, and the world as having been compounded thereof. But it was not so much his errors as his morals, which were quite in opposition to the discipline of Montanus, that rendered Hermogenes hateful in the eyes of Tertullian, who, as every one knows, was an ardent Montanist. For he had often times been married, a thing held impious by Montanus, and in the exercise of his profession had disregarded the rigid rules laid down by this preceptor. *Præterea*, says Tertullian, cap. i. p. 265. *pingit illicite, nubit assidue; legem Dei in libidinem defendit, in artem contemnit. . . . totus adulter, & prædicationis & carnis, siquidem et nubentium contagio foetet.*

bent

bent on him to deny that the Deity had created matter out of nothing.—This involved him in the necessity of maintaining that the matter of which God formed the world was eternal, although subject to his power [s]. Under the denomination

C E N T.
II.Hermo-
genes.

[s] Hermogenes was not led to deny that matter had been created out of nothing by the all-powerful will of the Deity in consequence of a belief that the thing was altogether impossible, but from his taking it for granted that matter was the sole fountain of every thing vicious and evil.—For he is brought forward by Tertullian, at the commencement of his book, as arguing after the following manner: If God made matter, he made it either of himself, or out of nothing. Either of these suppositions is absurd. If God made matter of himself, he could not have been a simple, indivisible, immutable being.—If he created it out of nothing, he could not have been good, or superlatively excellent. For matter is intrinsically vicious and corrupt. *Proinde*, (we give Tertullian's very words) *ex nihilo non potuisse eum facere (i. e. matter), sic contendit, bonum et optimum definiens dominum, qui bona atque optima tam velit facere quam sit.* His conclusion therefore was, that no alternative was left us but to believe that matter was coëval with the Deity, having existed together with him from all eternity. From this mode of reasoning it is manifest that Hermogenes considered the production of matter, as, to use the language of philosophers, *physically possible*, but as every way unworthy of the Deity, and therefore *morally impossible*, and that this his opinion was founded on the persuasion that matter was the seat and origin of every thing evil. Since the error then of Hermogenes respecting the fabrication of the world from eternal matter proceeded entirely from this opinion respecting the origin of evil, Tertullian ought to have made the cause or origin of evil the chief ground of his contention with him, and to have shewn that evil was derived, not from matter, but from other sources. This being once proved, the erroneous notion of Hermogenes respecting the creation of the world, must of necessity have fallen to the ground. But omitting every thing of this sort, Tertullian at once commences a furious attack on the dogma of his adversary respecting the eternity of matter; that is, he passes over in silence the root and principle of the error, and contents himself with attacking merely a consecrated deduc-

C E N T. denomination of the world he included not only
 II. corporeal substances but mind and spirit, which
 Hermo- he considered as having been in like manner
 genes. produced by the Deity from vicious and eternal
 matter [t]. As to any other points of Christian
 belief

cible from it. To this observation we may add another no less necessary to the right understanding of the doctrine of Hermogenes. Although he considered matter as coëval with the Deity, he nevertheless maintained that the Deity had from all eternity ruled over it, and held it in subjection, a circumstance which renders his opinion much more tolerable than that of certain others, who either assigned to matter, which they believed to be eternal, a peculiar ruler distinct from the Deity, or else contended that before the foundation of the world the Deity and matter had no connection whatever. That the opinion of Hermogenes was really such as I here state it to have been is placed out of all dispute by one of the arguments which he brings forward in proof of the eternity of matter. The argument I allude to is this: God hath been Lord from all eternity; therefore from all eternity there must have existed matter subject to his dominion. But let us hear the exposition which Tertullian himself gives us of this argument, cap. iii. p. 266. *Adjicit & aliud. Deum semper Deum etiam Dominum fuisse, numquam non Deum. Nullo porro modo potuisse illum semper Dominum haberi, sicut et semper Deum, si non fuisset aliquid retro semper, cujus semper Dominus haberetur: fuisse itaque materiam semper Deo Domino.*

[t] It is certain from what is said by Tertullian in his book *de Anima*, cap. i, and other testimonies, that Hermogenes did not attribute a more noble origin to men's souls than to their bodies. No doubt he might conceive that matter of a more subtle kind was used by the Deity in the formation of souls, but still he did not deny them to have been composed of matter. And to me the reason easily suggests itself why Hermogenes should have thought thus. Perceiving that souls were subject to depraved propensities and appetites, and at the same time being fully persuaded that every thing evil and vicious was generated of matter, and had its residence in matter, he could not but conclude, that the souls of men no less than their bodies were framed or composed of matter. Whether he entertained the same opinion respecting the good angels is not to be known at this day. But that he conceived the evil angels together
 with

belief he appears to have attempted no innovation whatever [u].

C E N 171
II.

with their leader or chief to have been formed out of matter, and that they would, at a future day, again be resolved into matter, is recorded by Theodoret, *Fabular Hæret.* lib. I. cap. xix. p. 207. tom. iv. opp. In what way he contrived to reconcile these principles with the tenets of the Christians at large, respecting the immortality of the soul, the angels, and other things, it might possibly be in our power to ascertain were we in possession of the book written against him by Tertullian, *de Censu Anima.*

The heresy
of Hermo-
genes.

[u] Tertullian, although he was most intimately acquainted with the tenets of Hermogenes, and regarded him with an implacable hatred, yet never once accuses him of entertaining any other errors than those above noticed respecting matter, the creation of the world, and the nature of souls. What is of still greater importance, this vehement writer acknowledges, in express terms, that the dogma of his adversary respecting Christ, the corner-stone of all religion, was found and orthodox. *Christum*, says he, cap. i. p. 265. *Dominum non alium videtur aliter cognoscere* (that is, he appears to entertain a belief respecting Christ similar to that of other Christians) *alium tamen facit, quem aliter cognoscit*: (i. e. what he professes respecting Christ, however, in words, he enervates and renders of no avail by his opinions) *immo totum quod est Deus aufert, nolens illum ex nihilo universa fecisse. A Christianis enim conversus ad philosophos, - sumpsit a Stoicis materiam cum Domino ponere, quæ ipsa semper fuerit, neque nata, neque facta, nec initium habens omnino, nec finem, ex qua Dominus omnia postea fecerit.* These charges in fact, although most invidiously brought forward, instead of criminating the person against whom they are adduced, serve clearly to demonstrate his innocence. And I therefore cannot agree with those of the learned who suppose that Hermogenes, whom Clement of Alexandria in his *Eclogæ Prophetica*, § lvi. p. 1002, reports to have taught that Christ deposited his body in the sun, was one and the same with the painter of whom we have been treating, who contended for the eternity of matter, although in support of this their opinion they may urge the authority of Theodoret. That Hermogenes also against whom Theophilus of Antioch and Origen are stated by Theodoret to have written, I take to have been a different man from him to whom our attention has been directed. Possibly amongst the Valentinians or some others of the Gnostics there might have been a man of this name that attained to some degree of celebrity in consequence of his broaching certain new opinions.

C E N T.

II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

LXXI. In addition to these numerous and great disputes, involving the very essentials of religion, there arose towards the close of this century, between the Christians of Asia Minor and those of other parts, particularly such as were of the Roman church, a violent contention respecting a matter that related merely to the form of religion or divine worship; a thing, in itself, truly of light moment, but in the opinion of the disputants, of very great importance. The affair was this. The Asiatic Christians were accustomed to celebrate their passover, that is the Paschal feast which it was, at this time, usual with the Christians to observe in commemoration of the institution of the Lord's Supper and the subsequent death of the Redeemer, on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month; that is to say, at the same time when the Jews ate their Paschal lamb; occasioning thereby an interruption in the fast of the great week. This custom they stated themselves to have derived from the apostles Philip and John, as well as from many other characters of the very first eminence. But the rest of the Christians, as well in Asia as in Europe and Africa, deemed it irreligious to terminate the fast of the great week before the day devoted to the commemoration of our Saviour's return to life, and therefore deferred the celebration of their passover or paschal feast, until the night immediately preceding the anniversary of Christ's resurrection from the dead. And for their acting thus, the Roman Christians, in particular, alleged the authority of the apostles Paul and Peter. This difference gave birth to another of still greater moment. For as the Asiatic Christians always commemorated our Lord's return to life on the third day after their partaking

taking of the Paschal supper, it was a circumstance liable to occur, and the which, no doubt, frequently did occur, that they kept the anniversary of Christ's resurrection, which afterwards acquired, and continues still to retain the denomination of *Pascha* or Easter, on a different day from the first day of the week, or that which is commonly termed *Sunday*; whereas the other Christians, as well those of the East as of the West, made it a rule to hold their annual celebration of our blessed Saviour's triumph over the grave on no other day than that on which it actually occurred, namely on the first day of the week [v].

CENT.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances;

LXXII. In

[v] Ancient writers, at the head of whom we may place Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiii. are very negligent and obscure in the accounts they give us of the nature and causes of this great controversy respecting the time of keeping Easter, which had nearly been productive of a most deplorable schism. Hence the whole class of more recent authors who have treated of the subject, and none more than those who in estimating the force and meaning of ancient terms, have permitted themselves to be led away by modern notions, and are not over-burthened with information as to the manners and customs of early times, have, in their explanation of it fallen into various errors, and been by no means happy in unfolding the true grounds of the dispute. The common opinion is, that the Asiatic Christians were reprehended by the rest for celebrating the anniversary of our Lord's resurrection at the same time that the Jews were accustomed to eat their passover. But this is altogether a mistake, and a thing with which they are never once reproached by any ancient authors. And indeed, to be convinced how little foundation there could be for such an idea, we need only ask ourselves what, I will not say reason, but semblance or shadow of a reason, could possibly have induced these Christians to commemorate the resurrection of our Lord at the time of his having been put to death? Most certain it is that Christ's return to life did not take place on the fourteenth day, when the Jews, agreeably to the in-

C E N T.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

LXXII. In the course of this century attempts were

junctions of their law are accustomed to celebrate their passover, but two days afterwards, at the least, that is to say, on the sixteenth, or perhaps even so late as the seventeenth day. Nor were the Asiatic Christians ignorant of this; nor did they pretend to deny it. What then could possibly have impelled them to be guilty of such an egregious incongruity as to determine that the grand annual celebration of Christ's resurrection should be observed on the fourteenth day of the month, a day on which they were well apprised that such resurrection did not take place? There are extant moreover, in an epistle written by Polycrates the bishop of Ephesus in defence of the Asiatic custom, and which is in part preserved by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiv. I say, there are extant in this epistle certain passages from which it is clear that no dispute whatever existed as to the time of celebrating the anniversary of the resurrection. Polycrates says, that he and the rest of the Asiatic bishops, in keeping the passover, on the fourteenth day of the month, conformed themselves to the Gospel, the common rule of faith & religion to Christians; ἐτήρησαν τὴν ἡμέραν τῆς τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτης τῆς πάσχα κατὰ τὸ Ἐυαγγέλιον, μηδὲν παρεκβαίνοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὸν κανόνα τῆς πίστεως ἀκολουθῶντες. *Servarunt* (those holy men) *diem Pasche quarta decima luna juxta evangelium, nihil omnino variantes, sed regulam fidei constanter sequentes.* In the sequel Polycrates again appeals to the Holy Scriptures, and, relying on their authority, concludes his disputation in the words of the apostles, *Acts*, v. 29. "We ought to obey God rather than men." The Asiatics, therefore, we see, contended that they conformed to the example of Christ, as propounded in the Gospel. Nor did their adversaries pretend to deny that the Gospel, and the example of Christ as held forth in the Gospel, were in favour of the Asiatic rule. What they contended for was, that in things of this sort, there was no necessity for closely and literally adhering to the rule of the Gospel, or the example of Christ as exhibited in the Gospel. If, said they, (as appears from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus, lib. v. cap. xxii) the days and months, when Christ did any particular thing are not, in the least, to be deviated from by those who would imitate his example, it is necessary that none of those circumstances should be omitted with which his celebration of the passover was accompanied; it ought therefore to be eaten in an upper chamber,

were not unfrequently made to put an end to this

CENT.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

chamber, &c." Now what are we to gather from all this? Do we find it stated in the Gospel, that Christ arose from the dead on the fourteenth day of the month, or that this was the day set apart for the commemoration of that event? Did Christ, when he partook of the paschal supper with his disciples, celebrate the festival of his resurrection? Nothing of this kind, as every one well knows, is to be met with in our Lord's history. It is plain then, that what the Asiatics contended for must have been this, that the day on which they were accustomed to hold their paschal feast was the same with that on which it appears from the Gospel that Christ, whose example it is incumbent on all Christians to follow, celebrated the passover with his disciples. The dispute therefore, between them and the rest of the Christians, had no relation to the day of Christ's resurrection from the dead, but respected the holding of a paschal supper similar to that which was celebrated by Christ with his disciples a short time previous to his crucifixion. This common error respecting the feast of Christ's resurrection having been celebrated by the Asiatic Christians on the same day that the Jews ate their passover, arose out of a mistaken interpretation of the word *Pascha*. Since the time of the Council of Nice this term has, for the most part, been considered as indicating that day on which our blessed Saviour arose from the dead, and on which it is usual for us to commemorate this his triumph over death and the grave. But by the more early Christians, previous to the Council of Nice, another meaning was annexed to it, it being made use of by them to designate the day on which Christ celebrated the passover and was offered up on the cross, the true paschal lamb, for the sins of the human race. Of its bearing this signification numerous examples might be adduced, but I will content myself with giving merely two, by way of convincing those who are but moderately informed on the subject of Christian antiquities, that I am not without authority for what I thus state. The first I shall take from Tertullian, the most celebrated Latin writer of this century, who, in his book, *de Oratione*, cap. xiv. p. 155. Opp. expresses himself in the following terms, *Sic et die Paschæ, quo communis & quasi publica jejunii Religio est, merito deponimus osculum, nihil curantes de occultando quod cum omnibus faciamus*. Now, who does not perceive that by the word *Pascha* we here ought to understand the day on which the Christians were accustomed to commemorate our blessed Saviour's death? For on this day it was the universal practice,

C E N T. this diffension, which was found by sad experience
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

throughout the whole Christian church, to fast ; whereas on the anniversary of Christ's resurrection every kind of fasting was inhibited. In another place, viz. in his book *de Jejuniiis*, cap. xiv. p. 712. Tertullian terms the whole week, which the Christians commonly stiled the *great*, or *the holy* week, *Pascha*. *Quamquam vos etiam sabbatum si quando continuatis, numquam nisi in Pascha*, (that is, on the Sabbath of that week in which the paschal feast is celebrated in commemoration of Christ's death and sufferings) *jejunandum putatis*. By other writers also, we find the word *pascha* used in this latter sense. To the example of this very ancient Latin author, I subjoin that of a Greek writer of much more recent date, namely the author of the *Chronicon Paschale*, edited amongst the Byzantine historians, by Rader, and Du Cange ; whence it appears, that even long subsequent to the Council of Nice the ancient notion attached to the term *Pascha* had not become entirely extinct. This author at p. 8. of the Parisian edition of his work by Du Cange most clearly applies the term *Pascha* to a different day from that whereon the anniversary of Christ's resurrection is kept, and which we term *Pascha* or Easter, and indicates by this word the day dedicated to the annual commemoration of our blessed Saviour's death. In memory of Christ, the true paschal lamb, says he, κατ' εκατόν εναντιον η τῷ θεῷ εκκλησια την αγίαν τῷ πάσχα εορτήν επιτελεῖ, ἀπλανῶς τηρῶσα τῆς εἰς τῷ πρώτῃ μηνὸς τῆς σιλίνης. *Quotannis ecclesia Dei sanctum paschatis festum celebrat, recte observata xiv. primi mensis Luna*. Καὶ εἰ μὲν εὐρεθείη αὐτη - - - ἐν ἡμέρα κυριακῇ τὴν αγίαν τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως Χριστοῦ τῷ Θεῷ ἡμῶν εορτὴν ἀγει. *Hac vero* (the fourteenth day of the month) *inventā, sequenti Dominica sanctum Christi Dei nostri ex mortuis resurrectioni festum peragit*. Many more passages of a similar kind might be cited from this chronicle, but I pass them over as unnecessary. I will add, however, a notable passage from the epistle written by the Emperor Constantine the Great to the bishops who could not attend the Council of Nice, and which is preserved by Theodoret, *Hist. Eccles.* lib. i. cap. ix. p. 627. The extract will be found to apply more immediately to the subject before us, and places it out of all dispute that the controversy between the Asiatic and other Christians respecting the paschal season, had no reference whatever to the day of Christ's resurrection, but to that of his sufferings and death. Περί τῆς says the Emperor, ἀγιωτάτης τῷ πάσχα ἡμέρας γενομένης ζητήσεως ἔδοξε κοινῇ γνώμῃ καλῶς ἔχειν, ἐπὶ μιᾷς ἡμέρας πάντας τῶς ἀπανταχῶ ἐπιτελεῖν. *De sanctissimo Die Pascha*

rienceto yield repeated occasion for unchristian-like wranglings

CENT.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

chæ quum lis exorta esset (this was one and the same controversy with that of which we are now treating, for after having lain dormant, it was renewed at the time of the Council of Nice, and was finally set at rest by a decree of that assembly) *optimum factu communi sententia* (of the Nicene fathers) *visum est, uno eodemque tempore hunc omnes ubique gentium celebrare*. In what sense it was meant that the term *Pascha* should be understood in this passage is shortly after rendered manifest by the emperor himself in the following words: ἔξεσι γὰρ τῷ ἐκείνων ἔθους ἀποβληθέντος ἀληθεστέρα τάξει, ἢ ἐν καιρῷ τῆς τῷ παθῆς ἡμέρας περὶ τῷ παρόντος ἐβυλάξασθαι, καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος τὴν τῆς ἐπιτηρέσεως ταύτης συμπλήρωσιν ἐγγίνεσθαι. *Fas enim est rejecta illorum (the Jews) consuetudine, veriore instituto, quod circa diem passionis hæcenus tenuimus, ejusdem observationis usum ad futura sæcula propagari*. By *Pascha*, therefore, the subject of their disputation, it is plain was meant ἡμέρα τῷ παθῆς, the day of our Lord's passion. Not being aware of this ancient signification of the word *Pascha*, more recent writers, when they read of the Asiatic Christians having been involved in a controversy with those of Rome respecting the paschal feast, were hastily led to persuade themselves that the Asiatic Christians celebrated the anniversary of Christ's resurrection on the same day on which the Jews ate their Passover; understanding the word *Pascha* according to its more recent sense, and never adverting to the possibility of its having, in earlier times, borne a different one. The merit of first discovering this, however, does not properly belong to me. The person who first of any, as far as my information reaches, discovered that the common notion in regard to this celebrated controversy respecting the paschal season was erroneous, was that illustrious member of the order of Jesuits so distinguished for his writings, the father Gabriel Daniel. See his *Dissertation de la Discipline des quatordecimans pour la Celebration de la paque*, in the third volume of his *Recueil de divers ouvrages Philosophiques, Theologiques, et Historiques*.—Paris, 1724, in 4to, p. 473—506. The same thing, if I well remember, is also noticed by Pet. Faydit in his notes to a sermon preached on the feast of St. Polycarp*. This error was more-

* In a subsequent publication, Dr. Mosheim took an opportunity of stating that his memory had in this instance proved unfaithful, and that on a re-perusal of Faydit's book, he found himself under the necessity of retracting the compliment which he had here paid to that writer's penetration.

C E N T. wranglings and the most intricate and acrimo-
 II. nious

Controversy
 respecting
 the Paschal
 observances.

over subsequently adverted to in a *Programma* propounded in the university of Gottingen on Easter-day, by that very profound and ingenious scholar Christoph. Aug. Heuman, who seems not in the least to have been aware of its having been previously detected by other people. Whiston too, in the *Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, Lond. 1749, 8vo, tom. ii. p. 601. complains that no one appeared to be acquainted with the true grounds and cause of this Paschal controversy, and acknowledges that he himself was for a long time involved in similar ignorance; but adds, that in his three *Tracts*, London, 1742, 8vo, he had unfolded the true nature of it from original authorities. Of these several works I regret to say that I have neither, just at this moment, within my reach, except that of Daniel, who, although he certainly discovers much information and judgment as to several particulars, yet in regard to many others has not, as it appears to me, attained exactly to a true state of the question. I will therefore myself make trial how far it may be possible to place the nature of this very obscure controversy in a just and perspicuous point of view. (I.) The early Christians, retaining as they did, not a few of the Jewish rites and ceremonies, were accustomed, after the manner of the Jews, to partake on a certain day of a Paschal supper, and eat together a Paschal lamb. This has been demonstrated from various authorities, by Hen. Dodwell, in his work *on the Use of Frankincense in the Church*. At present I shall not occupy myself in regularly repeating such demonstration, inasmuch as the truth of the thing will be rendered apparent by various circumstances to which it will be necessary for me to advert in the course of this discussion. This custom maintained its ground both in the eastern and the western church for many ages. Amongst the oriental Christians, the Armenians, the Copts, and others, it prevails even at this day. By the Christians of the west it has been gradually relinquished: some obvious traces of it, however, are still to be discerned even in Christian Europe. The principal difference in fact is, that amongst the European Christians the celebration of this sacred repast, which used formerly to take place in the churches or other places of public assembly, is now confined within the walls of private houses. This repast the early Christians were accustomed to distinguish by the Jewish denomination of *Pascha*, and certainly not without some shew of reason, for in point of external form it corresponded very nearly with the *Pascha*, or passover of the Jews. The
 repast

nious disputes [*zw*]. Under the reign of Antoninus

C E N T.
II.

[*zw*] The reader may consult as to this Epiphanius in *Hæres. Audianorum*, lxx. §. ix. p. 821.

Contrary
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

repast itself was undoubtedly of Jewish origin, and might therefore well continue to be distinguished by the ancient Jewish appellation. In the causes or reasons for celebrating this repast, the Christians and Jews were widely separated from each other. — (II.) The causes or reasons by which the Christians were actuated in the celebration of this paschal feast are not beyond the reach of discovery. In the first place they held themselves bound to follow the example of our blessed Saviour, who, previously to his laying down his life for the salvation of the human race, celebrated the passover with his disciples, and had thereby, as they thought, given his sanction to this Jewish rite, and in a manner commended the observance of it to his disciples. Secondly, it appeared to them, that the remembrance of the Holy Supper which our blessed Saviour instituted after his celebration of the passover, might be best preserved in this way. Nor can there be any doubt but that they closed this their paschal feast with the celebration of the Lord's supper. Lastly, believing as they did on the authority of St. Paul, 1 Cor. v. 7. that the Paschal lamb of the Jews was a type or figure of Christ's being offered up for the sins of mankind, it appeared to them that there could be no better way of commemorating the Redeemer's sacrifice, and bringing it, as it were, immediately before their eyes, than by celebrating that figurative representation of it which God himself had prescribed. This idea, moreover, of Christ's death having been prefigured in the slaughter of the Paschal lamb, and the fruits of his death by the Paschal feast, being deeply rooted in the minds of the early Christians, occasioned them, as we have above shewn by examples, to term the day devoted to the commemoration of our Saviour's death the Paschal day. — (III.) The Christians of Asia Minor were accustomed to celebrate this sacred feast, commemorative of the institution of the Lord's supper and the death of Jesus Christ, at the same time when the Jews ate their Paschal lamb, namely, on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month. For, as is clear from the words of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, which we just

C E N T. ninus Pius, in particular about the middle of this
II. century

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

just above cited from Eusebius, they considered the example of Christ as possessing the force of a law; and, as is equally manifest, they did not conceive our Saviour to have anticipated the passover, as is believed by many at this day, and particularly by the Greeks, but that the Paschal lamb was eaten by him and his disciples precisely on the same day on which the Jews, conformably to the directions of the Mosaic ritual, were ever accustomed to eat theirs. Let us hear as to this Epiphanius, who, although he is very obscure in his explication of the opinion of the *Quarta-decimans*, as those were termed who celebrated their Paschal feast at the same time with the Jews, yet intimates perspicuously enough, that the matter in dispute between them and the other Christians respected the time of eating the Paschal lamb. In *Heres. L. Quarta-decim.* § ii. p. 420. he expresses himself after the following manner: *πρῶτον γὰρ ἐν τῇ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῃ τὸ πάσχα ἄγνισι, χρεῖαν ἔχουσιν τὸ πρόβατον λαβεῖν ἀπὸ δεκάτης, καὶ τηρεῖν αὐτὸ ἕως τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτης. - - εἰάν δὲ πρὸς ἑσπέραν τυθῆ τὸ πάσχα ἢ αὐτῇ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτῃ ἐπιφώσκουσα ἐξ διατελεῖ ἡμέρας ἐν τῇ νηστείᾳ. Primum enim si (Quarta-decimani) Pascha die xiv. celebrant, necesse est ut Agnum jam die decimo adducant, atque ad diem decimum quartum (vivum) custodiant. Quod si ad Vesperam Pascha fuerit immolatum quod xiv. die illucescente geritur, sex dies jejunio tribuendi sunt.* In these words of Epiphanius there are some things which defy explanation, and Petavius himself, by the Latin translation which he has given us of them, and which is in part erroneous, and in part imperfect, has tacitly acknowledged that he was unable to comprehend altogether what it was that Epiphanius meant to convey. I will however endeavour to separate what is clear and apparent from what must of necessity remain involved in obscurity. First then it is manifest, that the dispute with the *Quarta-decimans* was respecting the Paschal feast and the Paschal lamb, not the day for commemorating the resurrection of our blessed Saviour from the dead. For in this passage the word *Pascha*, in the first instance, evidently means the Paschal feast, and in the second the Paschal lamb. Secondly, it is clear that the *Quarta-decimans*, like the Jews, ate their Paschal lamb on the fourteenth day of the month. Thirdly, it is apparent that they took home this lamb in order to its undergoing the requisite preparation,

century a serious discussion of the affair took place

C E N T.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

tion, so early as the tenth day. Fourthly, it is obvious that they kept this lamb alive until the fourteenth day. Fifthly, it is plain that they slew this lamb, with certain ceremonies no doubt, on the evening of the fourteenth day. Whence it follows, Sixthly, that they solemnly feasted on this lamb on the night following this evening. We shall presently see that the adversaries of the Quarta-decimans did not disagree with them respecting this supper itself, but as to the time of celebrating it. (IV.) By this Paschal feast which the Asiatic Christians were accustomed to celebrate at the same time with the Jews, an interruption took place in that strict and solemn fast which the other Christians made it a rule inviolably to observe throughout the whole of the great or holy week. Immediately after the celebration of this feast, however, it was the practice of the Quarta-decimans to resume their fasting, and continue it until the day appropriated to the commemoration of our Saviour's return to life. The reader will find this recorded by Epiphanius in *Hæres. lxx. Audianorum*, § xi. p. 823. The *Audians*, in their celebration of the Paschal feast, were accustomed to follow the example of the Asiatic Christians or Quarta-decimans, and justified their practice by alleging that in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, a work different from the one that has reached our days under that title, and at present considered as irrecoverably lost, the Apostles had expressly enjoined that in celebrating their Paschal rites the Christians were to observe the same time with the Jews. Epiphanius labours hard to deprive them of this argument; and amongst other things with which he encounters them, adduces the following passage from the same Constitutions: λέγεισι οἱ αὐτοὶ Ἀπόστολοι, ὅτι ὅταν ἐκεῖνοι εὐχαῶνται ὑμεῖς νηστεύοντες ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν πενθεῖτε, ὅτι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς ἑορτῆς τὸν χριστὸν ἐσαύρωσαν. Καὶ ὅταν αὐτοὶ πενθεῖσι τὰ ἄζυμα ἐσιόντες ἐν πικρίσῃ, ὑμεῖς εὐχαῖσθε. *Idem Apostoli* (in the constitutions which ye quote as favouring your practice) *præcipiunt, Dum epulantur illi* (the Jews), *vos jejunantes pro illis lugete, quoniam Feslo illo die Christum in Crucem sustulerunt. Cumque illi lugentes azymis & laeticis agrestibus vescuntur, vos epulamini.* The Christians are here enjoined by the Apostles to celebrate the passover with the Jews, and thereupon they are told to feast and rejoice at the time when the Jews were sorrowfully eating their unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and on the contrary to mourn and fast on the day that the
Jews

C E N T.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

place at Rome between Anicetus, the bishop of that

Jews rejoiced on account of their having put Christ to death. Petavius the erudite translator of Epiphanius, avows himself unable to comprehend the meaning of the Apostles in this. But from what we have observed above, there is as much light thrown upon this apostolical injunction as is necessary. The Christians who agreed with the Jews as to the time of celebrating the Passover, held with joy and gladness their Paschal feast in commemoration of the institution of the Lord's supper on the same night that the Jews fed on bitter herbs and unleavened bread, but on the following day, when the Jews gave themselves up to rejoicing, these Christians returned again to fasting, humiliation and tears, inasmuch as it was on that day that their Lord and Master Christ had been put to death on the cross.—(V.) On the third day following the fourteenth of the month, the Asiatic Christians always celebrated the anniversary of Christ's resurrection from the dead. For since, as we are informed by Polycrates, they made it a point to follow as exactly as possible the example of Christ, and the rule of the Gospel, and it appeared from the testimony of the evangelists that Christ arose from the dead on the third day after the Jewish passover, consistency required that they should fix on this day for the annual commemoration of that glorious event. This practice, however, gave rise to another difference between them and other Christians. For it was the custom with the latter never to keep the feast of the resurrection on any other than the first day of the week, or, as we term it, Sunday: whereas the former, we mean the Asiatic Christians, very frequently celebrated Christ's triumph over death and the grave on one or other of the ordinary week days. For as the fourteenth day of the month did not always fall on one and the same day of the week, and they always commemorated our blessed Saviour's return to life on the third day after the fourteenth, it of course happened that such commemoration took place with them in one year on a Monday, in the next, perhaps on a Tuesday, and in a third on a Wednesday, and so on. When the fourteenth day of the month, for instance, fell on a Tuesday, these Asiatic Christians kept the feast of the resurrection on the Thursday following: or supposing it to fall on a Wednesday, their feast took place on the Friday after. Hence the Roman prelate Victor, and those who took part with him, decreed; *ὡς ἂν μὴ δὲ ἐν ἄλλῃ ποτὲ τῆς κυριακῆς ἡμέρα τὸ τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως ἐπιτελοῖτο τῷ Κυρίῳ μυστήριον.*

that city, and Polycarp the celebrated bishop of Smyrna. C E N T.
II.

Controversy respecting the Paschal observances.

μυστήριον. Καὶ ὅπως ἐν ταύτῃ μόνῃ τῶν κατὰ τὸ Πάσχα νησιῶν φυλακτόμεθα τὰς ἐπιλύσεις. *Ne videlicet ulli alio quam Dominico Die mysterium resurrectionis Domini unquam celebretur; utque eo duntaxat die Juniorum Paschæ terminum observemus.* Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiii. p. 190. It is plain, therefore, that the Asiatic Christians must frequently have celebrated *The mystery of the Resurrection of Christ* on a different day from Sunday: for had they, in the celebration of this mystery, conformed to the practice of other Christians, there would have been no necessity for this regulation. In these words of Eusebius, however, it is observable that a clear distinction is made between the day of the mystery of Christ's resurrection and what is termed *Pascha*, that is the season devoted to the commemoration of his death and passion. In the observance of *Pascha*, that is, the commemoration of Christ's sufferings and death, the Asiatic Christians, as to time, agreed precisely with the rest: the only thing in which they differed was, that whereas the latter fasted without intermission throughout the whole of the season, the Asiatics indulged themselves with a temporary relaxation on the fourteenth day. The mystery of Christ's resurrection, however, was not always celebrated by them on the Sunday, as was the uniform practice of all other Christians, but, occasionally, on other days of the week, agreeably to what we have above remarked. This difference was certainly of greater moment, and, to confess the truth, one less easily to be endured than the other. For to celebrate the festival of Christ's resurrection on a different day of the week from that whereon he actually arose, must have appeared repugnant, not only to the faith of history, but to ancient custom and Christian decency. — (VI.) The Christians dwelling without the confines of Asia deemed it irreligious to terminate the Paschal fast before the festival of the resurrection; and as altogether unbecoming and disgraceful in Christians to hold out any ostensible connection between their paschal lamb, so widely differing in its purpose and design from that of the Jews, and the Jewish passover. They therefore deferred their Paschal feast until the night preceding the festival of our Saviour's resurrection, and connected the commemoration of the institution of the Lord's supper with that of Christ's triumph over death and the grave. Let us hear as to this Epiphanius, in *Hæres.* l. *Quartadecimanorum.* §iii. p. 421, ἡ ἀγία Θεοῦ ἑκκλησία - - κέκτηται ἕ μόνον τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτη, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆ ἑσθέρμ' δ.

C E N T.

II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

Smyrna [x]. But by no arguments whatever could the Christians of Asia be prevailed on to abandon

[x] See Eusebius *Histor. Eccles.* lib. iv. cap. xiv. p. 127. and lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 193. In fact it is to this author that we are indebted for nearly the whole of what is here related.

ἑβδομάδι - - ἵνα κατὰ τὰ ὑπὸ τῆ κυρίας γεγόμενα κατὰ τὸ πρῶτον, ἢ ἡ ἀνάστασις τε καὶ ἑνωχία. *Ecclesia sancta Dei - - non solum decimam quartam diem sed etiam hebdomada observat - - ut ad eorum exemplar quæ sunt a Domino gesta Resurrectio epulaque celebrentur.* And after some intervening remarks, he continues, Φέρομεν δὲ ἐπὶ τῆν ἁγίαν κυριακὴν τὸ τέλος τῆς συμπορώσεως* λαμβάνομεν δὲ τὸ πρόβατον ἀπὸ δεκάτης, ὄνομα τῆ Ἰωσὲ ἐπιγρόντες διὰ τὸ Ἰῶτα, ἵνα μὴ λάθῃ ἡμᾶς μηδὲν τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀληθιναν πασᾶν τῆς ζωτικῆς ταύτης τῆ πάσχα τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς πραγματείας. *In sanctam Dominicam religiosissimi temporis finem conjicimus : sed agnum jam tum a decimo die sumimus quoniam in Iota littera Jesu nomen agnoscimus, ne quid omnino diligentiam nostram effugiat, quod ad ecclesiasticam salutaris paschæ celebrationem pertinere videatur.* Now we will not spend our time in endeavouring to dispel the obscurity in which this passage also of Epiphanius is involved, but direct our attention merely to such things as stand in no need of elucidation. In the first place, then, it is to be remarked, that the adversaries of the Asiatic Christians celebrated a paschal feast just as these Christians themselves did. Secondly, that they conjoined this feast with the festival of our Lord's resurrection. Thirdly, that as to this matter they, no less than the Asiatics, persuaded themselves that they followed the example of Jesus Christ; but in what way they could possibly have made this appear is not very easy to comprehend. Fourthly, that by this feast, which they celebrated in the night preceding the day devoted to the commemoration of our Lord's resurrection, they closed their paschal season, or that most holy period of time which was annually set apart for the solemn commemoration of Christ's sufferings and death. This feast, therefore, constituted no part of the commemoration of the resurrection, but was the grand concluding act of the preceding paschal season. The night being elapsed, these Christians commenced with the dawning day their celebration of the anniversary of Christ's triumph over death and the grave. Fifthly, it appears

abandon their practice, which they considered as having been handed down to them by the apostle

C E N T.
II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

appears that the paschal lamb, of which they partook on the night preceding the feast of the resurrection, was selected and put under a course of preparation on the tenth day of the month; a circumstance corresponding precisely with the practice of the Asiatics. For this Epiphanius gives us a far-fetched reason derived from the letter I, which is the first in the name of Jesus. The force of this reason, however, may be comprehended without difficulty. The letter Iota was made use of by the Greeks to denote the number ten. These Christians then, if any faith is to be placed in the statement given by Epiphanius, reasoned after this manner: the name of Jesus begins with the letter I; but the letter I denotes the number ten; that lamb therefore which is the shadow or emblem of Jesus, who was sacrificed for our sins, ought to be selected from the flock, and brought to the house of the high priest on the tenth day. This mode of reasoning was certainly by no means foreign to the genius or disposition of the early Christians, who, like the Cabbalist Jews, conceived great mysteries to be involved in certain numbers. I must confess, however, that I do not believe this to have been the true origin of the custom, but rather suspect Epiphanius to have followed, in this instance, merely the suggestions of his own fancy. The lamb thus separated from the flock on the tenth day, and in a certain degree consecrated, was not immediately slain, but seems to have been kept alive until the evening next preceding the feast of the resurrection. Sixthly, it appears that these adversaries of the Asiatic Christians gave to the whole of the season which they devoted to the commemoration of Christ's sufferings and death, and more particularly to that feast with which they concluded it, the denomination of *Pascha*. This is manifest from the last words of Epiphanius. (VII). These things, then being duly weighed and ascertained, it is, I think, plainly to be perceived in what respects the Asiatic Christians or Quarta-decimans differed from the rest. Their disagreement was not, as the learned father Daniel imagined, respecting the proper season or day for commemorating Christ's death: for it was no less the practice of the Christians in general than of the Asiatics to consider as peculiarly solemn and sacred, that day on which Christ made atonement by his death for the sins of the human race: and

even

C E N T.

II.

Controversy
respecting
the Paschal
observances.

tle St. John. Impatient therefore of their pertinacity, it was towards the close of the century determined by Victor, bishop of Rome, that these Asiatics should be dealt with after a more peremptory manner, and be compelled by certain laws and decrees to conform themselves to the rule observed by the greatest part of the Christian community. In this resolution he was supported by the voice of several councils that were called together in various provinces on the subject; and under the cover of their sanction, he addressed to the Asiatic bishops an imperious epistle, admonishing them no longer to persist in differing from other Christians as to their paschal observ-

even as to the very day itself no difference of opinion whatever existed between them and the Asiatics. παρατηρήμιδα, says Epiphanius, *Heres.* L. i. § iii. p. 421. μὲν τὴν τεσσαρτηκαιδέκατον. *Et nos quartam illam decimam diem* (which is held sacred by the Quarta-decimans) *religiose servamus.* Neither did the time for celebrating the feast of our Lord's resurrection constitute the principal or leading point in dispute between them, but the time for holding the paschal supper. The dispute, in fact, embraced the three following questions: First, whether it was proper to begin the day devoted to the commemoration of Christ's sufferings and death with the paschal supper, and thereby break in upon the sacred and solemn fast of the day? The Christians of Asia Minor asserted the propriety of this usage, the other Christians denied it. Secondly, whether it was becoming, in the disciples and followers of Christ, to eat their paschal lamb at the same time when the Jews, his most inveterate and rancorous enemies, ate theirs? The Asiatic Christians contended that it was; the other Christians, that it was not. Thirdly, whether it was proper to celebrate the feast of our blessed Saviour's resurrection always on the third day after the fourteenth day of the month on which he was put to death? The Asiatic Christians maintained that it was; the others, that it was not; these latter insisting, that as it was on the first day of the week that Christ actually arose from the dead, no other day than this ought to be appropriated to the commemoration of that stupendous and unparalleled event.

ances [y]. Finding, however, that they were not in this way to be moved, but that they boldly addressed letters to the Roman church by Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, in justification of their ancient practice, Victor proceeded to the further length of excluding them from his communion, or, in other words, he pronounced them altogether unworthy of being any longer considered by him and his church in the light of brethren [z]. This imprudent

C E N T.

II.

Termination of the Paschal controversy.

[y] Polycrates in his Epistle to the Roman church, *apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 193*, says, ἐπιτρέξομαι ἐπὶ τοῖς κατακληπισσομένοις. *Nilil moveor iis quæ nobis ad formidinem intentantur.* These words plainly prove that Victor did not pursue a moderate and amicable course with his Asiatic brethren, but had recourse to threats, and wished to have impressed their minds with fear.

[z] Eusebius *Histor. Eccles. lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 192*, says, Βίκτωρ ἀδελφῶς τῆς Ἀσίας πάσης ἅμα ταῖς ὁμόθυσαι ἐκκλησίαις τῆς παροικίας ποτίμην ὡς ἑτεροδόξους τῆς κοινῆς ἐνώσεως πειρᾶται, καὶ σπλίττει γὰρ διὰ γραμμῶν ἀκοινωνήτας ἄβδν πάντας τῶς ἐκείσε ἀνακηρύττων ἀδελφῶς. Of these words Valefius gives us the following translation. *Victor omnis Asia vicinarumque Provinciarum Ecclesias, tanquam contraria recte Fidei sentientes, a Communione abscindere conatur, datisque litteris universos qui illic erant fratres proscribit, & ab unitate ecclesie prorsus alienos esse pronuntiat.* From the word πειρᾶται, which Eusebius makes use of, this learned writer thought himself justified in concluding that Victor did not in reality exclude the Asiatics from all communion with the faithful, but merely wished, or attempted so to exclude them, and that this his attempt was frustrated by the interference of Irenæus. This interpretation is approved of by many of the friends to the papacy, who seem to imagine that the temerity of Victor is thereby somewhat extenuated. Others would contend that at least this much must be granted them, that the words of Eusebius are ambiguous, and that we are consequently left in a state of obscurity as to whether Victor actually excommunicated the Asiatics, or merely wished and endeavoured to have them excommunicated. By the greater part however, not only of Protestant but Roman Catholic writers, it has long been considered that what is sub-

C E N T.
II.Termination
of the Pas-
chal contro-
versy.

prudent step might have been productive of the most serious detriment to the interests of Christianity

cluded the Asiatics from his communion, relieves his preceding words from every sort of obscurity, and makes it apparent that the Roman prelate did not content himself with merely willing the thing, but actually carried his threats into execution. But to me it appears that even these, although their ideas on the subject are more correct than those of Valefius and his followers, have not exactly caught the meaning of Eusebius. The historian, unless I am altogether deceived, is speaking of two designs which Victor had in view, the one of which was merely conceived, the other carried into effect. Victor both wished and endeavoured to bring about the expulsion of the Asiatics from all communion with the Catholic church, as corrupters of the true religion; but in this he failed of success: for the other bishops would neither conform themselves to his will, nor imitate his example. What therefore he could accomplish without the concurrence of the other bishops, that he did; that is to say, he by letter expelled the Asiatics from all communion with the church of Rome over which he presided. The latter words of Eusebius are badly rendered by Valefius, and through this faulty translation, support has been afforded to a common error in regard to what was done by Victor on this occasion, to which I shall presently advert. The Greek words, ἀνακηρύττων ἀλλογενήτας are rendered into Latin by Valefius thus, *ab unitate ecclesie prorsus alienos esse pronuntiat*. But this by no means corresponds with the Greek original, in which nothing whatever is said of alienation, *ab unitate ecclesie*. The translation ought to have ran *a communione sua alienos pronuntiabat*. The words of this eminent scholar however, are strictly in unison with the common opinion of both Roman Catholics and Protestants, who are all unanimous in considering Victor as having, by his letters, deprived the Asiatic brethren of every sort of communion with the whole Christian church; in fact, as having on this occasion asserted the same powers with regard to excommunication as were exercised by his successors posterior to the age of Charlemagne. The Protestants in particular call upon us to mark in this case the first specimen of the arrogant and domineering spirit of the bishop of Rome, the first example of anti-christian excommunication. But these worthy men laboured under an error, and formed their judgment

tianity had not Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, interfered, and, although differing himself in opinion

C E N T.
II.

nion

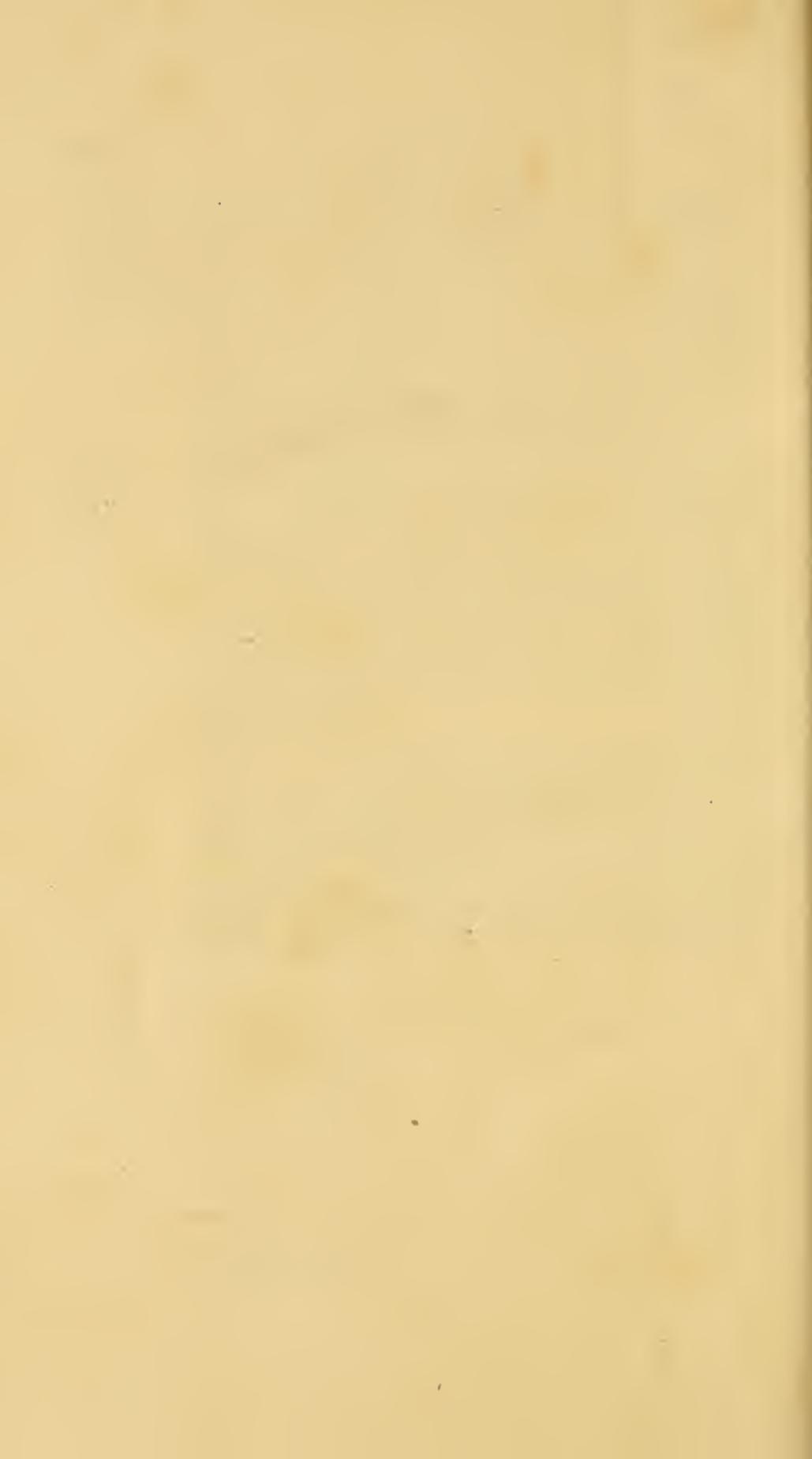
Termination
of the Pas-
chal contro-
versy.

judgment of a matter of antiquity from the practice of more recent times. In the age in which Victor lived, the power of the bishop of Rome had not attained to such an height as to enable him to cut off from communion with the church at large all those of whose opinions or practices he might see reason to disapprove. The very history of the Paschal controversy now before us, places this out of all dispute. For had the bishop of Rome possessed the right and power of cutting off whom he pleased from all communion with the church at large, neither Irenæus nor the rest of the bishops would have dared to oppose his will, but must have bowed with submission to whatever he might have thought proper to determine. Every bishop however possessed the power of excluding all such as he might consider to be the advocates of grievous errors, or as the corrupters of religion, from all communion with himself and the church over which he presided, or in other words, he might declare them unworthy of being considered any longer as brethren. This power indeed is possessed by the teachers of the church even at this day. Victor then, exercised this common right with which every bishop was invested, and by letters made known to the other churches that he had excluded the Christians of Asia Minor, on account of their pertinacity in defending their ancient practice, from all communion with himself and the church of Rome, expecting, in all probability, that the other bishops might be induced to follow his example, and in like manner renounce all connection with these Asiatics. But in this he was deceived. ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι γε τοῖς ἐπισκόποις ταῦτ' ἠγίσσατο, says Eusebius, *Histor. Eccles.* lib. v. cap. xxiv. p. 192. *Verum non omnibus hæc placebant Episcopis.* The rest of the bishops declined following the example of the Roman prelate in a line of conduct so very dangerous and imprudent. There can be no doubt, however, but that they would have followed his example, indeed, whether willing or not, they must have followed it, if in this age the doors of the church might have been closed against men by the mere will of the Roman bishop. The conduct of Victor therefore, on this occasion, although distinguished by temerity and imprudence, does yet not wear so dark an aspect as is commonly imagined, neither could it have been attended with consequences of such extensive importance

C E N T. nion from the Asiatics, written letters to the
 II. bishop of Rome and the other prelates, pointing
 Termination out, in the most forcible terms, the injustice of de-
 of the Pas- priving of their rights, and pronouncing unworthy
 chal contro- of the name of Christians, brethren, whose senti-
 versy. ments, with regard to religion itself, were strictly
 correct, and against whom no other matter of
 offence could be alleged than a diversity as to
 certain external rites and observances. The
 Asiatics also, in a long epistle which they cir-
 culated throughout the Christian world, took
 care to remove from themselves every suspicion
 of an attempt to corrupt the Catholic religion.
 A sort of compromise, therefore, took place with
 regard to those ritual differences, each party retain-
 ing its own peculiar opinions and usages, until
 the holding of the council of Nice, in the fourth
 century, when the custom of the Asiatics was al-
 together abolished.

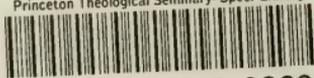
as those would have us believe who hold it up as the first
 abuse of excommunication. The fact is, that they who
 treat the matter in this way, are guilty of an abuse with re-
 gard to the term *excommunication*. Victor did not (according
 to the sense in which the term is at present understood)
excommunicate the Asiatics, but merely declared that he
 and the members of the church over which he presided,
 must cease to consider them in the light of brethren until
 they should consent to renounce their objectionable practices.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



BW935 .M913 v.2
Commentaries on the affairs of the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00015 9329